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ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

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DIPLOMACY

The world comes to New Delhi

- Global leaders arrive in Indian capital for G20 summit • Biden, Scholz, Macron and Sunak among those attending
- Indian premier projects summit as showcase for his country • He holds an hour of closed-door talks with Biden



Arab News New Delhi

World leaders began arriving in New Delhi on Friday for the weekend summit of the Group of 20 major economies.

US President Joe Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, and Japan's Fumio Kishida are among those attending.

The streets of the usually bustling city were deserted ahead of the summit with businesses, offices and schools closed as part of security measures to ensure the smooth running of the most high-powered meeting India has hosted. Slums have been demolished and monkeys and stray dogs have been removed from the streets.

New Delhi has been decked up for the gathering with a brand new summit venue, fountains, flowerpots and illumination along major thoroughfares, alongside thousands of armed security personnel standing guard.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is projecting India's presidency of the group and hosting the summit as a showcase for the country's fast-growing economy and its increasing geopolitical clout.

Modi has painted the summit as India's diplomatic coming of age, evidence of New Delhi's prestige on the global stage.

Hopes grew on Friday that the leaders will be able to agree on a final declaration at the summit, with sources saying only the wording about the war in Ukraine had yet to be resolved.

Negotiators have been struggling for days to agree on the language because of differences over the war, hoping to get Russia and China on board to produce a communique that will also address pressing global



US President Joe Biden before attending a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his residence in New Delhi on Friday. Twitter

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problems such as debt and climate change.

India's G20 sherpa, or lead negotiator, Amitabh Kant said the summit's concluding statement, the Leaders' Declaration, would be a "voice" of the Global South and developing countries. "New Delhi Leaders' Declaration is almost ready," Kant said.

One source said: "We may paper over the differences and make a general statement saying we should have peace and harmony across the world so that everybody agrees."

Biden and Modi held closed-door talks for nearly an hour on Friday, shortly after the president arrived in New Delhi. Later they said they

had pledged their commitments to cooperate on a range of issues from democratic values to semiconductor supply chains and quantum computing.

The discussions illustrated "the breadth of the relationship between our countries," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said.

SUBSIDIES CUT

Anti-Assad protests in Druze heartland

Arab News Jeddah

More than 2,000 demonstrators marched through the Druze heartland city of Sweida in southern Syria on Friday in an anti-regime protest movement that appears to be growing.

Protesters tore down a portrait of President Bashar Assad that was hanging above the local branch of the Farmers' Union, then welded the doors of the offices shut. Demonstrators chanted "We don't want you, Bashar" and "We will have freedom in spite of you."

In recent days protesters have torn up portraits of the president's father, Hafez Al-Assad.

The protests in Sweida began after the government ended fuel subsidies in August, dealing a heavy blow to Syrians reeling from war and economic meltdown.

"The scale of the protest is be-

FASTFACT

Protesters tore down a portrait of President Bashar Assad and chanted 'We don't want you, Bashar' and 'We will have freedom in spite of you.'

cause the presence of women is making itself felt. All social classes are there," activist Rayan Maarouf said. He said the protesters in Sweida city center had come from all over the province.

Discontent at the cost of living has also hit other areas of southern Syria, notably Daraa province, the cradle of the 2011 uprising that Assad's regime crushed.

The Druze, who made up less than 3 percent of Syria's pre-war population, have largely stayed out of the conflict.

Sweida has also been mostly spared the fighting, facing only sporadic jihadist attacks that were repelled.

Regime security forces have a limited presence in Sweida province, and Damascus has turned a blind eye to Druze men refusing to perform their compulsory military service outside the province.

The Brief

RIYADH SEASON

Riyadh Season could see as many as 12 million visitors and is targeting more than a million tourists from outside the Kingdom, said the head of KSA's entertainment authority. P6

LOAN TO TURKIYE

The World Bank has unveiled a new \$18 billion loan package for Turkiye in a show of support for the government's efforts to reshape its economic policy. P7

SAUDI-OMAN DEAL

Oman's small businesses will benefit from a \$53.33 million agreement signed by the country's development bank and the Saudi Fund for Development. P12

APPEAL FOR CALM

20 hurt as new clashes erupt in Lebanon refugee camp

Fatah movement exchanges fire with Islamist militants after five-week ceasefire collapses

Najla Houssari Beirut

At least 20 people were injured when new clashes erupted early on Friday in the Ain Al-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp in south Lebanon after a five-week ceasefire collapsed.

The fighting in the camp on the outskirts of the coastal city of Sidon once again pitted members of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement against Islamist militants.

Dozens of families with children fled from the camp's northern end where the clashes were concentrated, and some took shelter in a nearby mosque. Classes at the



Lebanese University in Sidon were suspended, and scheduled exams were postponed.

One source said there were "intensive contacts between Leba-

Smoke billows during clashes in the Ain Al-Helweh camp in Lebanon's southern coastal city of Sidon on Friday. AFP

nese and Palestinian leaders" in an effort to restore calm.

The UNRWA school complex in the camp has become a barricade between the warring factions,

separated by the common school playground, which now serves as a line of contact.

Ain Al-Helweh is home to more than 54,000 registered refugees from Israeli aggression and the Syrian civil war. In the worst outbreak of violence in years, five days of clashes that began in late July left 13 people dead and dozens wounded.

By long-standing convention, the Lebanese Army does not enter Palestinian refugee camps and leaves the factions themselves to handle security.

The July violence erupted after the death of an Islamist militant, followed by an ambush that killed

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Radars



The Riyadh Season, in its fourth edition, has achieved 40% of its targeted revenue through sponsorship and large deals.
Turki Al-Sheikh
 Chairman of the Saudi General Entertainment Authority

KSA today



Riyadh Pottery workshop

Moraj Ahmad will teach participants the basics of pottery in this workshop. Learn how to use a pottery wheel and mold clay to create beautiful mugs. For more details, visit experiences.suplift.com



Riyadh History trip

Walk through the old alleyways of Riyadh while discovering stories from the past. Listen and follow a certified tour guide and storytellers, who will accompany you on the trip. Join the experience through experiences.suplift.com



Jeddah Candle session

Learn how to make a candle, all the way from coloring it to making its scent. The workshop is being held in Jeddah, and to book for Sunday's session go to experiences.suplift.com



Jeddah Padel skills

Test your skills at padel, a sport that mixes tennis with squash. Booking and other details can be found on experiences.suplift.com

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Mazin bin Ibrahim Al-Kahmous, president of the Saudi Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority, also known as Nazaha, visited the headquarters of the International Criminal Police Organization — Interpol

— in the French city of Lyon on Friday. Al-Kahmous was received by Interpol's Secretary-General Jurgén Stock and senior members of the organization. The parties discussed various topics of mutual interest, focusing on enhancing cooperation between Nazaha and Interpol

to help combat corruption and cross-border crimes. They also explored avenues for strengthening collaboration with relevant organizations within regional and international frameworks and agreements.

Today's Number

\$1.25tr

Saudi Arabia is set to become one of the world's largest construction hubs thanks to more than \$1.25 trillion in infrastructure and real estate projects in the pipeline, according to real estate consultancy firm Knight Frank.

Review

Raw.K

NADA HAMEED

Raw.K is a restaurant that has truly set itself apart in Riyadh's healthy-eating dining scene. In a city where such options were once limited, Raw.K emerged in 2018 with a mission to put consumers first and offer a flexible menu.

The name Raw.K is a clever play on words, emphasizing the restaurant's commitment to natural ingredients and the abundance of vitamin K found in greens. This thoughtful naming sets the tone for what you can expect when you dine here.

What truly distinguishes Raw.K is its flexibility and consumer-centric approach. The ability to customize salads using a variety of fresh local and imported fruits and vegetables is a delightful feature. You can choose from their menu that includes fresh juices, wraps, rice bowls, or their signature Hot Bowls.

One of Raw.K's standout features is its doorstep delivery service, operated through a



mobile kitchen and catering vehicle. If you are lucky enough to be in one of their limited delivery zones in Riyadh, you can have a freshly prepared meal at your doorstep in just 15 minutes.

The cherry on top is that Raw.K does not charge delivery fees within their service zones. Ordering through aggregators may incur location-based fees.

The fact that they can accommodate customized orders and special requests speaks volumes about their dedication to customer satisfaction.

With branches at Al-Nakheel, Tamkeen Tower and Al-Kindi Plaza, Raw.K ensures convenient access for diners across Riyadh.

Raw.K goes beyond great food, pioneering innovation as one of the first restaurants to introduce a food-making robot. For more information visit: <https://www.instagram.com/rawk.sa/>

What's Trending Today's hot topics explained by Ameera Abid



SAFETY CONCERNS

Hurricane Jova

GA Category 5 storm named Hurricane Jova has been spotted brewing in the Western Hemisphere. Experts say it is the strongest hurricane of this year so far.

While Hurricane Jova emerged above the Pacific Ocean, it is fortunately not headed to the coast. It is said to have started as just a tropical storm before increasing in size as its winds reached a speed of 160 miles per hour.

The winds calmed down a notch, giving the hurricane a Category 4 rating on Thursday.

Brandon Buckingham, an AccuWeather meteorologist, said: "Jova will track to the northwest through the weekend and is not expected to bring direct impacts to land. It will, however, bring rough surf and rip currents to the west coast of Mexico and potentially into coastal Southern California.

Hurricane Lee has also formed in the Atlantic Ocean, which might be giving company to Hurricane Jova in the basin. Hurricane Lee is also predicted to reach Category 5 soon. However, experts say that they do not expect both to be at their peak strength at the same time.

Lee is the 12th named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30 and peaks in September.

APOLOGY

Jimmy Fallon

XLate-night show host Jimmy Fallon has apologized after news circulated that his staff had been suffering because of the toxic work environment.

According to an article published by Rolling Stone, former employees and two current employees have said that the set of the show is a "toxic workplace" because of the high-stress nature of the job, which has taken a toll on their mental health.

They even shared that there are "crying rooms" where staff retreat to when upset and facing negativity in the workplace.

Fallon himself was allegedly rude to staff and would harshly assess their work. In one incident, he reportedly scolded a staff member who was handling cue cards in an interview with comedian Jerry Seinfeld, who urged Fallon to apologize.

Fallon and showrunner Chris Miller hopped on a Zoom call after the article was published, and Fallon apologized, saying that he never intended to create that type of working atmosphere.

"It is embarrassing, and I feel so bad. Sorry if I embarrassed you and your family and friends ... I feel so bad I can't even tell you," he said.

"I want the show to be fun. It should be inclusive to everybody. It should be the best show."

People on X, the social media platform previously known as Twitter, shared their opinions.

@thedavidgasan said: "It is a shame to see the 3 icons and legends in an entertainment business, who make you laugh daily, choose to go this path where reality is day and night."

@AoDespair said: "It was a small, flippant moment, but Jimmy Fallon lost me when he normalized Donald Trump in 2016, playing with his hair. Even at that early moment, the threat to our republic's political norms seemed obvious. I went off on him then, later wondering if my anger was undue. Nah."

@GuyWhoConquers said: "The fact that this got 46 likes shows society really lost. Because this isn't what cancelled culture is about. It is about putting people like Jimmy Fallon, who is a toxic boss, in check."



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

• Celebrate the world of high-end jewelry with an exhibition by renowned jeweler Lorenz Baumer. This event showcases Baumer's craftsmanship and artistry. From necklaces and earrings to rings and bracelets, each piece reflects Baumer's vision and expertise. Held until Sept. 30 at Baumer Boutique at Printemps in Doha.

• M7 is hosting the exhibition "Zwara: Focus on Forever," which draws inspiration from the "Forever Valentino" exhibition to explore the fusion of fashion with art, architecture, and technology. The team behind the exhibition incorporated their diverse practices and cultural heritage to produce a collection reflecting Qatar's creative landscape. The

exhibition, which is at M7 in Doha, Qatar, runs until Sept. 10.

• Experience the thrill of Gravity Indoor Skydiving in Zallaq, Bahrain. This attraction offers a massive indoor wind tunnel where you can feel the sensation of freefalling and learn the art of body flight. With expert instructors and top-notch equipment, safety is a priority. This adventure caters to all skill levels.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

Sept. 9	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:48	6:04	12:20	3:45	6:35	8:05
Madinah	4:45	6:03	12:21	3:50	6:38	8:08
Riyadh	4:16	5:35	11:53	3:22	6:10	7:40
Abha	4:41	5:56	12:10	3:31	6:22	7:52
Dammam	4:00	5:20	11:39	3:10	5:57	7:27

Economic growth cannot advance if the crucial concerns of the Global South are not addressed.
Subrahmanyam Jaishankar
 India's minister of external affairs



Spotlight **G20 SUMMIT 2023**

GROUP OF TWENTY

The quest for consensus

India has sought to project itself as a defender of Global South interests during its year-long G20 presidency

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi
Natalia Laskowska Warsaw

Leaders of the world's most important economies are converging on New Delhi for the annual G20 Summit beginning on Saturday.

The Indian capital has had a makeover, with colorful decorative plants, green posts, fountains, sculptures, new streetlights and illuminated logos of India's G20 presidency visible all the way from the international airport to the city's center and around the main meeting venues.

Parts of the metropolis of 33 million people also went quiet as some of the main roads were shut and 130,000 security personnel were deployed to guard the event.

But what is the G20, why is this year's summit important, and what should we expect from it?

The grouping of the world's 20 major economies was established in the late 1990s, in the wake of the Asian financial crisis to address such events collectively.

Over the years, it has morphed into a forum for addressing urgent global problems such as food security, climate change and, since the 2021 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the global repercussions of the conflict.

Together, members of the G20 account for 85 percent of global economic output, 75 percent of international trade, and about 60 percent of the world's population.

The group's members are 19 countries — Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Türkiye, the UK, and the US — plus the European Union.

Every year, the group is led by a different member, which hosts its policy meetings and their culmination — the leaders' summit. India took over the G20 presidency from Indonesia last year and will hand it over to Brazil.

This year's G20 Summit is the group's 18th and India's first as the host. It is the culmination of more than 200 meetings of G20 ministers, sherpas, and engagement groups, as well as side events and workshops that have taken place in more than two dozen cities across India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet made sure that G20 meetings were visible, resonated across the country and were widely followed at home and abroad, in what became a campaign to establish India's image as a global power.

"India has lavished more attention on the G20 than any other host country in the past. This obviously means that all the main events are more high profile and are likely to generate good press for India," Aditya Ramanathan, a research analyst at the public policy center Takshashila Institution in Bangalore, told Arab News.

The summit — coming right after India's successful moon landing and last week's launch of its first solar mission — would be expected to crown all the branding efforts, but how successful it is going to be does not depend on India alone.

"The G20 is much more divided today than it was a few years ago," Ramanathan said.

"Global politics has changed dramatically since 2020 because of three factors: the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and



Students work on paintings of world leaders at an art school in Mumbai, ahead of the G20 Summit (right) in New Delhi. Below right: A Saudi-Indian agreement being signed in the presence of Prince Fahad bin Mansour at the G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance Summit in New Delhi in July. AFP, Supplied



"It's not like Beijing does not see value in the grouping. However, it does not want to be seen endorsing India as a leader of the Global South, which is how the Indian government has pitched its G20 presidency."

India and China, the world's two most populous nations, have been competing to position themselves as the principal voice for the emerging economies of the Global South — that is, countries mostly in the Southern Hemisphere, and largely in Africa,

China's worsening ties with several countries."

China's relations are frosty not only with the US, but also with India, with which tensions have flared sporadically along their Himalayan border for the past three years.

After Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping was the second head of state to signal his absence at the summit. But while Putin also skipped the G20 Summit in Indonesia last year — in the wake of tensions over the Russian invasion of Ukraine — this will be the first time a Chinese leader has missed a summit since the first meeting in 2008.

"I don't think that Xi Jinping's decision to not attend is about the G20 per se," said Manoj Kewalramani, a fellow in China studies at Takshashila Institution.

Asia and Latin America, which until recently have often been described as developing or less developed.

India has used the world's premier forum for economic cooperation to present itself as playing a bridging role between these countries and the West.

During last month's summit of the E20 — the official G20 dialogue forum for the global business community — India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar said that "the core mandate of the G20 is to promote economic growth and development and that cannot advance if the crucial concerns of the Global South are not addressed." Under India's presidency, many meetings revolved around problems that plague the Global South, like reform of the international debt architecture and the impact of geopolitical uncertainties on access to food and energy.

India has also pledged that as G20 chair it would prioritize addressing the climate crisis, including the financing of response to climate change, developing green technologies, and a just energy transition.

During the G20 Summit, world leaders will address what in general is referred to as key

FAST FACTS

- The G20 was founded in 1999 in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis as a forum for ministers and central bank governors to discuss global economic issues.

- It was upgraded to the level of heads of state and government after the 2007/08 global financial crisis, becoming the premier forum for international economic cooperation.

problems affecting the stability of the global market.

Some of the other issues up for agreement are green development, which includes climate finance, accessible digital public infrastructure, and augmenting renewable energy sources, as well as a global plan to improve sustainable agriculture and food security.

The ultimate goal of the G20 forum is to formulate a joint statement and the ongoing war in Ukraine is likely to affect that. In the communique, the leaders will have to explain, for example, why the world is facing food and energy insecurity and high inflation. However, during the ministerial meetings held throughout the year, G20 countries could not reach an agreement on what has caused this situation.

Western countries blame the crisis on Russia's invasion of the world's breadbasket, Ukraine, and some, including the US, France and Canada, have signaled that they would refuse to sign any joint declaration that does not condemn it.

If the leaders fail to achieve consensus, it would be the first time since the bloc's founding that a summit would end without a joint communique. In that case, India, as the host country, will have to produce a statement summarizing the points the countries agreed on as well as the divergences.

"The G20 is taking place at a time when the world is impacted by the Ukraine war, and India represents the bridge between two extreme views," said Sanjay Kapoor, analyst and chief editor of the political magazine Hard News.

"It's a difficult summit to hold at this juncture. Though it has possibilities, the challenge would be to build a consensus around the core issues. The ministerial meetings haven't yielded much in that direction."



A G20 emblem seen on the crown of a building illuminated with the Indian national flag in New Delhi. AFP

G20 SUMMIT

A Middle East presence without precedent

Egypt, Oman and the UAE invited as non-member guests, demonstrating MENA's importance to India's foreign policy

Lama Alhamawi Riyadh
Natalia Laekowska Warsaw

As India welcomed world leaders in New Delhi on Friday, it set a precedent in G20 history by inviting the most Middle Eastern countries ever to take part as guests in the group's key summit.

The Group of 20 largest economies, as a forum, has been important for the Middle East since its inception in 1999, especially as Saudi Arabia and Turkey are among its members.

However, it was only in 2008, when the group began to organize its annual leaders' summit, that non-member countries from the Middle East became involved.

Host nations, and those holding the group's rotating presidency, can invite non-member countries to their ministerial, sherpa and working meetings, as well as the leaders' summit.

The invitations aim to strengthen the legitimacy of the G20 and promote global outreach. While there are permanent invitees such as Spain, other non-members usually differ from year to year.

This time around, non-member Arab countries have enjoyed greater representation than ever, with three of them joining ministerial, sherpa and working group



Oman's Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Asaad, left, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, right, are greeted by Indian officials upon arrival at Palam Air Force Airport in New Delhi for the G20 leaders' summit. EPA/Supplied

meetings. They will also be part of the leaders' summit on Saturday and Sunday.

India has extended invitations to nine non-member countries, including Egypt, Oman and the UAE.

"The UAE, Oman and Egypt are, alongside Saudi Arabia, India's closest economic and defense partners in the Middle East, so it's unsurprising that New Delhi chose to invite them to attend the G20 summit among a handful of other nations," Dr. Hasan T. Alhasan, a research fellow for Middle East policy at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, told Arab News.

"India is using its hosting of the G20 to showcase its global influence to its Middle Eastern partners, and to demonstrate the breadth of its partnerships to other G20 member states."

India's ties with the Middle East are particularly strong with Saudi Arabia, but Delhi's decision to engage its three other major Middle Eastern partners shows how important it deems the relationship, and not only to India's foreign policy.

Relations, especially with Gulf Cooperation Council countries, have been a priority for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration for the past nine years.

"Since Modi assumed office in 2014, India has expanded its security and defense cooperation in the Gulf with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman. It holds increasingly regular military exercises and high-level defense consultations with its three Gulf partners," Alhasan said.

This cooperation extends to energy security. India is the GCC's third-largest oil market and sources about a third of its oil from the six states of the bloc. At the same time, half of its liquefied natural gas comes from Qatar, the UAE and Oman.

"Since India is expected to account for a large share of growth

**G20 2023 DELHI SUMMIT
SPECIAL INVITEES**


ARAB NEWS

in global oil demand by 2045, GCC oil exporters are keen to secure a long-term share of the Indian oil market," Alhasan said.

"Similarly, India has cemented its political relations with GCC oil and gas exporters to hedge against geopolitical shocks and ensure a stable supply of energy."

There is also a sense of competition with India's regional rival, China, as relations between Delhi and Beijing have been increasingly tense.

"India seems to have an undeniable national interest in cementing relations with its partners there," Marita Kassis, a Beirut-based political analyst and media expert on the Middle East, told Arab News.

"For the past few months, India has been using the G20 momentum to build its geopolitical framework. Following the 2020 border clashes, India and China's relations grew tense. Both countries have been locked in a competitive security strategy of openness with the Middle East."

She added: "The interest in strengthening Middle Eastern-Indo relations is always a significant plan as the region tries to venture into new projects, lead new economic opportunities and technologies, and build new political orbits around the world."

NEW DELHI

Moment of pride for a historic city

Municipal authorities spent millions on the renovation and beautification of the Indian capital for the G20 Summit

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

In honor of the G20 leaders' summit taking place in New Delhi this weekend, the Indian government has spent millions of dollars on beautifying the capital with thousands of trees, plants, sculptures and colorful decorations.

Work on this grand makeover has been underway for many months, with light displays, bright murals and ornate flowers popping up across the city to welcome the many heads of state and government arriving from around the world.

Roads have been renovated, pavements decorated, and large billboards featuring the face and words of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been strategically placed.

Illuminated G20 logos have been installed, as have several new fountains and sculptures, each with a unique design reflecting Indian national culture. Heritage buildings in the heart of the city, meanwhile, have had their facades renovated.

"(The cost) is around 60 crore rupees (\$7.2 million), and that was not only for G20, as we have already started enhancing many things," Satish Upadhyay, vice chairman of New Delhi Municipal Council, told Arab News.

"We have been preparing for this for the last year. We have planted more than 5 million saplings; 100,000 potted plants along different roads. Then we have planted 3,000 big, special trees; more than 20 sculptures have been installed; fountains have been put at more than 11 locations; and some bodies of water were created too."

Tankers and four treatment plants are working round the clock to produce sufficient water to make sure the new green sites are properly irrigated, he said.

"We have set up a control system 24/7. We have deployed more than



Traditional craft items on display at a bazaar inside the G20 venue on the eve of two-day leaders' summit in India's capital New Delhi. AFP

3,000 employees," he added.

All the ornaments and arrangements are designed to reference traditional Indian aesthetics. The artists behind these works came from across the country and, according to Upadhyay, these new decorative features are here to stay as a G20 legacy.

"After the summit, everything will be intact except for some potted plants," he said.

Vishakha Gupta, a student who lives in the Indian capital and

Delhi has become more beautiful. It's good that the world can see India from a different perspective. India is not only about slums and dirty areas.

who traveled to the G20 venue in Pragati Maidan to take photographs, was pleased to see the investment in expanding New Delhi's green spaces.

"I especially like the plants, because they are more beautiful than anything else. They are the cherry on the cake," she told Arab News. "I think Delhi has become more beautiful. It's good that the world can see India from a different perspective. India is not only about slums and dirty areas."

Anushi Gupta, also a student, was impressed by the new illuminations and the lotus-shaped logo of India's G20 presidency.

"My favorite piece of decor is this multicolored area where it is written 'Welcome G20 India.' It looks really amazing. The lighting is also amazing," she told Arab News. "Delhi has changed a lot. You can see the beautification of this place. The credit goes to the prime minister."

Another Delhiite, Ranjan Kumar

Jha, said he was pleased to see how environmentally friendly the new installations are. "What I like is the combination of nature and technology. Proper care has been taken so that nature is not harmed," he told Arab News.

"For the G20 Summit, Delhi has been decorated like a bride and we are all ready to welcome the whole world. This is a moment of pride for us Indians. I like the change. I am a citizen of Delhi. I feel proud that Delhi is hosting this."

INTERVIEW

'Do not leave anyone behind'

Nasser Al-Jaryad, Saudi delegate to the Labour 20, urges G20 to prioritize workers' rights in the final communique

Rashid Hassan Riyadh

As the Indian capital New Delhi hosts the Group of 20 leaders' summit, expectations are high among delegates that world leaders will achieve consensus on a forward-looking approach to common challenges and issues, including workers' rights.

Speaking to Arab News, Nasser Al-Jaryad, Saudi Arabia's representative to the Labour 20 and chairman of the Saudi National Committee of Workers Committees, said he hopes world leaders will take the L20's recommendations on board.

"As we know, the G20 summit is a big platform where important issues are discussed by leaders," said Al-Jaryad ahead of the two-day summit, which opens in New Delhi on Saturday.

"There are big challenges, especially from our side, for workers all over the world, and we as L20 representatives are looking forward to this summit considering all the issues of workers and addressing our concerns regarding the future of the economy and what is impacting workers.

"That's why we are looking forward to all the recommendations. We send them directly to the leaders and we hope all of our recommendations will be considered in the final communique."

The L20 is a group of unions from G20 countries that aims to ensure the G20 process takes into account the interests and needs of workers. After a series of meetings and consultations earlier this year, the L20 presented a set of recommendations to world leaders.

Its key objectives include promoting job creation, strengthening social protections, ensuring the protection of workers' rights and promoting gender equality in the workplace. The L20 also advocates for fair and decent wages, safe and healthy working conditions and the elimination of forced and child labor.

Al-Jaryad participated in the L20 summit in Patna, a city in northeast India, in June, where delegates agreed on a multilateral mechanism among G20 member states



and associated countries to establish five task forces to address key issues related to the world of work.

These included universal social security, women and the future of work, international migration and the portability of social security benefits, the changing world of work, and skill development.

"All of these recommendations coming from us will be considered in the final discussion and the leaders' summit," he said.

Al-Jaryad believes the theme of this year's G20 summit, "One Earth, One Family, One Future," should be understood as a call for closer cooperation, not only between nations but within societies, where the needs of working people are occasionally overlooked.

"It gives us a message that we need to think together and try to have a solution for this issue, especially



Nasser Al-Jaryad, left, was part of the Saudi delegation to the L20 in India's city of Patna. In June, above, which set out recommendations for the G20 leaders' summit, main, AN photo/Supplied



the economic issue, which is impacting all of us in the world, especially the workers, who we think are a weaker section overall in many countries, especially the poor countries and African countries," he said.

"We never forget anyone and do not want to leave anyone behind. We want to cover all of the needs of this workers' group. This is what we concentrated on during the discussion in all our meetings of the L20 in 2023 when we started

our meeting in India...

"We concentrated on the impact on workers... This is what we need to mention to the leaders, and we hope this summit will cover all of that and think about what we can build in our future, how we can create jobs, how we can cover all of this loss. This is mentioned in our recommendation."

The global economy has been buffeted in recent years by numerous crises, first by the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the ripple effect of the war in Ukraine, which has contributed to inflation in the prices of food and energy.

The effects of these crises have fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of the world's workers and poorest, who have seen the price of borrowing rise, the cost of living inflate, and the availability of jobs evaporate, forcing millions more worldwide below the poverty line.

Added to this are anxieties over the impact of new technologies

on many manual and clerical jobs, with advances in automation and artificial intelligence poised to replace human workers in many fields.

"We already discussed it in the last L20 summit in June, in which we mentioned very clearly that we need a very strong future plan to cover all of this loss," said Al-Jaryad.

As the only Arab country among the G20 member states, Saudi Arabia is uniquely placed to act as an ambassador for the wider interests of the Gulf region, particularly in relation to the oil and gas industries, Al-Jaryad said.

"Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest countries in the G20, and as we know, it is the only one from the Arab world and the Gulf," he said. "We are sure all of these recommendations on the decisions from this summit will impact all of the economies of the Gulf."

"That's why we think all of the ideas that we discussed as a Saudi representative should be considered (as coming) from the region, and all the recommendations to be issued from the summit should consider this."

"We, all of the Gulf countries, are petroleum-producing countries. All the decisions for the global economy will impact the petroleum-producing countries too ...

"We need to know how we can plan our future for our workers and our countries and how we can meet all of these targets to have a strong future for our economies."

Finally, Al-Jaryad noted that Saudi Arabia and India share very cordial relations, which are set to develop further in the wake of India's G20 presidency.

"As we know, India is the seventh largest trading partner of Saudi Arabia. This will have a very strong impact especially in the economy and on how we can strengthen relations between India and the Kingdom," he said.

"India is the fifth largest investor in the Kingdom, which means it is one of the biggest trading partners (with) an investment in Saudi Arabia."

"We know there are many Indian workers in Saudi Arabia. They helped build many of our projects and supported development. This will really strengthen our relations and economies."

Era of divisions needs a new vision to reshape the world order

TALMIZ AHMAD

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hosting of the G20 summit at the newly constructed Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Sept. 9-10 will mark the culmination of a year-long effort involving more than 200 meetings and several thousand delegates in different parts of the country. Official engagements have been supplemented with conclaves involving businesspeople, universities and think tanks that have thrown up new and exciting ideas on boosting global cooperation.

The G20 is a product of a globalized world and is now the "premier forum" to address pressing international economic challenges. This makes sense since the G20 includes 65 percent of the world's population, 85 percent of global economic output and 75 percent of global trade.

The Indian presidency is taking place at a time when the world is facing serious challenges. Even before the global economy recovered from the ravages of the pandemic, the Ukraine war had a devastating effect on developing countries. The New Delhi summit should have been an opportunity for the G20 to address this shared catastrophe.

Unfortunately, the principal efforts of advanced countries have been directed at ensuring Russia is punished for starting the conflict. This has affected the G20 as well. Despite numerous meetings of G20 ministers and officials in India, not a single

consensual document has been approved. The US-led Western alliance has insisted that any joint statements include specific criticisms of Russia, along with veiled negative references to China.

India has consistently worked toward highlighting the positive agenda that serves the emerging economies and the developing world in general. In its capacity as president of the G20, India convened a hybrid summit of 120 developing countries in January this year, titled "The Voice of the Global South."

Indian officials said the conference would deliberate "on those concerns, interests and priorities that affect the developing countries, and unite in voice and purpose in addressing these elements." A later report quoted Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the external affairs minister, as saying that, as the forum's president, "India would represent countries that are not at the G20 table."

In the past year, countries in the Global South have been struggling with the high costs of imported food and energy, the negative impact of climate change and the start of the El Nino weather pattern — the combined effects of which have saddled them with burdens amounting to trillions of dollars. The transition away from fossil fuels, for instance, means that emerging economies, excluding China, will require \$1 trillion per year until 2025 and twice that until 2030 to meet their development needs.



Talmiz Ahmad is a former Indian diplomat.

National leaders have insisted on the need for the reform of global institutions. Their principal targets are the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which were set up by advanced countries even before most African states had thrown off the yoke of colonialism. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has described these institutions as "a morally bankrupt global financial system that perpetuates poverty and inequalities."

The Indian presidency's focus has been directed at the interests of the Global South, mainly inclusive and resilient growth, green development and climate finance, women-centric development, and technology-led transformation. The last has been particularly novel and exciting. Technology-related conclaves in India have prioritized the harnessing of diverse applications of technology in the areas of health, biotechnology, pandemic preparedness, digital currencies and cross-border payments, as well as the use of data in general.

Saudi Arabia's 2020 presidency of the G20 played a major role regarding digital health focusing on IT infrastructure, equity of access, policy and regulatory environment, and upgrading of workforce and institutional capacity.

In the wake of the Ukraine war, the US has attempted to mobilize support for sanctions against Russia. However, hardly any nation in

Asia, Africa and Latin America has imposed sanctions or accepted the US pursuit of a global polarization that would revive the prospect of a new Cold War. Most nations dislike the idea of confrontation and conflict, and, instead, prioritize development in a multipolar order.

In an effort to win friends and influence developing nations ahead of the G20 summit, US President Joe Biden announced a commitment to the development of the Global South through major American and World Bank funding for infrastructure and climate. But this seems a politically charged agenda, focusing more on competing with China than serving the genuine needs of developing countries.

The gradual distancing of the G7 nations from the interests of the developing world offers opportunities for the major emerging economies to work more closely with each other, coming up with a new vision for global transformation that prioritizes the interests of the Global South and shapes practical time-bound initiatives to realize it.

This challenge can be effectively met by Saudi Arabia and India working together with like-minded countries — a subject that should be high on the agenda when Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets Modi in New Delhi after the summit. Together, the two leaders can shape a new global economic order.



During the two months of the festival, the commission also stages various courses and workshops to allow producers and other interested parties to learn new skills and share their expertise. SPA

THE TASTE OF PRIDE

4th annual AlUla Dates Festival gets underway

Cultural celebration features markets, auctions, workshops

SPA AlUla

The 4th AlUla Dates Festival opened on Friday under the slogan "Taste Our Pride."

Organized by the Royal Commission for AlUla, the annual celebration offers a cultural experience for visitors while boosting the local and national economy. Events will take place every Friday and Saturday through Nov. 11.

One of its main aims is to make AlUla dates more popular and competitive on local, regional and international markets. That is in line with the goals of Vision 2030, which seeks to strengthen the Kingdom's position as the world's largest date producer. The festival is divided into two parts.

From 6-9 a.m. each Friday and Saturday — between Sept. 8 and Oct. 28 — there will be a date auction in Al-Aziziyah district.

Then, from 5-11 p.m. — between Oct. 13 and Nov. 11 — there will be a souq at Manshiya Market. These gatherings allow visitors to meet farmers, producers and artisans, as



FASTFACTS

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• Farmers can also register for the Saudi Dates Mark platform, which is a trademark granted to the owners of farms, factories and other related businesses that meet the global market standards on food safety.

well as sample the many date-based culinary treats on offer.

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During the event, some AlUla farmers will be selected to take part in the 4th International Dates Conference & Exhibition, which will be held in Riyadh at the end of the year.

AlUla is home to more than 2 million palm trees dotted across 10,000 hectares of dedicated farmland. The date market has seen a resurgence in recent years and the region now produces over 90,000 tons of the fruit annually. It is home to many varieties, including the Mabroom, Barni, Al-Helwa and Medjool.

ENTERTAINMENT

Next edition of Riyadh Season can attract up to 12m visitors, says official

Arab News Riyadh

The fourth edition of Saudi Arabia's Riyadh Season could see as many as 12 million visitors, the head of the Kingdom's entertainment authority said.

"We expect 10 million to 12 million visitors this year, and we target more than a million tourists from outside the Kingdom," Turki Al-Sheikh, chairman of the board of directors of the General Entertainment Authority, told a press briefing in Riyadh.

"The Riyadh Season, in its fourth edition, has achieved 40 percent of its targeted revenue through sponsorship and some large deals even before it's started," he said.

This year's Riyadh Season, which is set to launch on Oct. 28, will be historic, he said.

The entertainment festival launched for the first time in



This year's Riyadh Season, which is set to launch on Oct. 28, will be historic, Turki Al-Sheikh, head of the General Entertainment Authority, said. Supplied

2019 and attracted over 7 million visitors. Last year, over 15 million people attended the festival, including over 1 million tourists from 125 countries. The festival generated over 150,000 direct and indirect jobs with the participation of 1,255 companies.

The Riyadh Season 2022

HIGHLIGHTS

• The entertainment festival launched for the first time in 2019 and attracted over 7 million visitors.

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included over 7,500 events, 10 international exhibitions, more than 350 theatrical performances, in addition to an international car exhibition and auction, more than 70 cafes, 200 restaurants, a video games tournament, and more than 100 interactive shows.

TheSpace

Practicing integrative medicine for optimal health

SAAD MAJDY BASLUM



Integrative medicine focuses on treating and healing the mind, body, and soul to achieve the overall well-being of the person.

The aim is to understand the underlying cause of a condition and address it by integrating conventional (medication) and complementary therapies.

A wide range of complementary therapies, techniques or practices include acupuncture, Chinese herbal therapy, chiropractic therapy, culinary medicine, holistic and massage therapies among others.

The number of complementary medicine practitioners in the EU is approximately 145,000 physicians trained in modern medicine along with one of the complementary medicine practices or methods of which 80,000 practice acupuncture.

To achieve the vision of integrative, or fusion, medicine in the US, the name of the American National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, established as an office in 1992, was changed to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health in 2014. In 2016, the center's spending increased from \$2 million to \$366 million. The World Health Organization also supports the integration of complementary and modern medical practices.

Through its latest strategy, 2014–2023, it aims to facilitate the integration of complementary and traditional medicine practices into national health systems by assisting and aiding member states in developing their national policies in this field.

The Federation of National Academic Centers for Integrative Medicine was also established in the US — which includes about 20 percent of all academic medical centers in the US — including prestigious universities such as Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Stanford and others.

It also extended to include universities in Canada, Australia, and Brazil among others.

There are many fellowship programs in the field of integrative medicine for doctors in the US, including the integrative medicine fellowship and the integrative family medicine fellowship at the Andrew Weil Center at the University of Arizona, and the clinical fellowship for integrative medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, which are affiliated with an integrative medicine center or companies.

There is another two-year fellowship offered by Weill Cornell University, and programs in the same field offered by George Washington University, the University of Wisconsin, and Ohio University.

There are also several training programs and fellowships in scientific research in integrative medicine, including those offered by the MD Anderson Oncology Center at the University of Texas.

All of these programs aim to provide knowledge to doctors to practice integrative medicine and to provide a distinguished medical service to patients.

The entry and support of integrative medicine services in Saudi Arabia aims to achieve one of the important goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which is

to raise the quality of life in Saudi society.

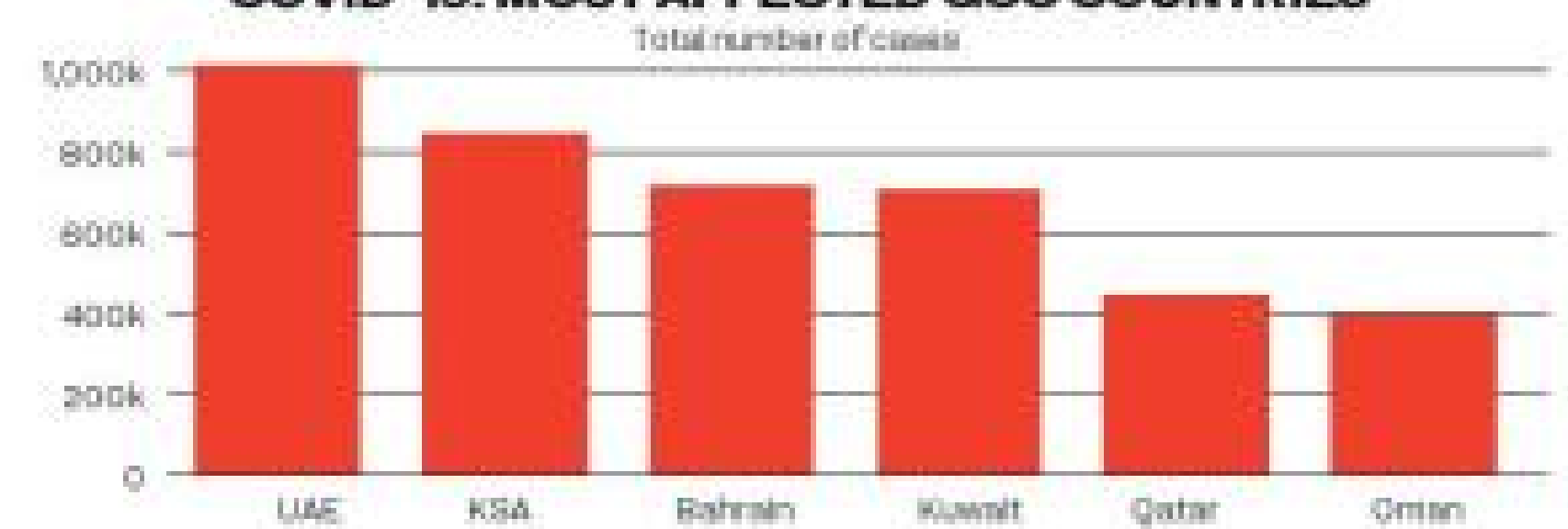
In addition, to concentrating on sending several doctors for training in these fellowships, it also attracts investments in this field, whether domestic or foreign.

In a survey conducted by the National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the Kingdom in 2019 that included participants from all over the country, 82 percent of the participants indicated their support for the establishment of complementary medicine clinics within primary health care centers, which supports the idea of integrative medicine.

Saad Majdy Baslum is a highly experienced director with 10+ years of leadership and specialist experience in complementary medicine practice. Baslum holds a doctorate in traditional Chinese medicine, a master's in Chinese herbology, and a master's in acupuncture.

The Day's FIGURES

COVID-19: MOST AFFECTED GCC COUNTRIES



Source: Worldometers

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Vision 2030

Saudi Arabia hosts postal union congress

The Kingdom will host the 4th Extraordinary Congress of the Universal Postal Union — the UN agency responsible for leading the development, regulation, interoperability and sustainability of the international postal network — in Riyadh from Oct. 1 to Oct. 5.

The congress is the supreme decision-making body of the UPU, convening plenipotentiaries from the organization's 192 member countries every four years.

An extraordinary congress is convened at the request of member countries when there are urgent postal sector issues pending decisions that cannot wait until the next quadrennial meeting. During the event, UPU member countries will discuss opening the union to wider postal sector players, planning a path for climate action in the sector, the future of postal financial services, and other urgent matters. SPA Riyadh

Assistance

Saudi Arabia's relief efforts in Sudan praised

Ahmed bin Ali Al-Baiz, assistant general supervisor of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, met with the deputy special representative for Sudan with the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan, Clementine Nkweta-Salami, and her accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed issues of common interest related to humanitarian and relief affairs, developments in the relief and humanitarian projects implemented by KSR relief in Sudan, and ways to enhance them.

Nkweta-Salami praised the humanitarian aid provided by the Kingdom through KSR relief to all countries in need around the world and to the Sudanese people in particular, to contribute to alleviating the suffering of the needy.

SPA Riyadh

Security

Attempt to smuggle 183,900 Captagon pills thwarted

Saudi Arabia's Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority at Al-Batha port has thwarted an attempt to smuggle 183,900 Captagon pills into the Kingdom, it was reported on Friday.

During a routine check, officers found the Captagon pills hidden inside the trunk of a vehicle, the authority said.

The authority said that after liaising with the General Directorate of Narcotics Control, the person who was meant to receive the items inside the Kingdom was arrested.

Moreover, the authorities will continue tightening controls at the Kingdom's entry points, and urged citizens and residents to report smuggling attempts via the number 1910, email at 1910@zatca.gov.sa, or on 0096611420847.

The authority said all reports would be treated in a confidential manner and financial rewards offered.

SPA Riyadh

News Middle East

CONFIDENCE

World Bank agrees new \$18bn loan to support Turkiye's economic reforms

Deal suggests support for new finance minister, central bank chief, analysts say

Menekse Tokyay Ankara

The World Bank has unveiled a new \$18 billion loan package for Turkiye in what appears to be a show of support for the government's efforts to reshape its economic policy.

The deal, which comes on top of a \$17 billion loan signed off by the lender earlier in the year, was announced just a day after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz presented their medium-term plan, which included targets for inflation, employment and economic growth for the 2024-26 period.

Two-thirds of the new loan are expected to be directed toward the private sector in the form of direct investments and guarantees. The remainder will help to finance public sector activities, including the extensive reconstruction work necessary after the devastating earthquakes that struck the south-west of the country in February.

In an interview with the state-run Anadolu news agency, Humberto Lopez, the World Bank's country director for Turkiye, praised the government's efforts to restore macroeconomic stability.

"We believe that the monetary policy tightening being implemented by the central bank, the unwinding of distortive financial regulations and the fiscal revenue measures to curtail the fiscal deficit being pursued by the Ministry of Finance are steps in the right direction," he said.

"In addition to our ongoing \$17 billion program, new operations worth \$18 billion will be prepared and presented to the World Bank Group's board of directors in the next three years.

"Taking into account all financing instruments, this amounts to an interim total financial package of approximately \$35 billion."



Food shop sellers attend to clients in Istanbul. Turkish President Erdogan is fully on board with the new economic policies, members of his economy team said. AP

Amid an ongoing economic crisis, the appointments of former Merrill Lynch economist Mehmet Simsek as finance minister and ex-Goldman Sachs banker Hafize Gaye Erkan as central bank governor after the May election were seen as evidence of Turkiye's determination to return to a more orthodox monetary policy. The \$17 billion loan package was approved before that poll took place.

Timothy Ash, a London-based strategist at Bluebay Asset Management, said the timing of the new deal suggested an improvement in Turkiye's relations with its Western allies, which would have been influential in the bank's decision.

"We should now watch for other

Turkiye has a strong potential to rise once it adopts correct policies to address its macroeconomic imbalances.

Selva Demiralp,
Professor of economics

multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to follow suit and increase exposure," he told Arab News.

The deal was "a vote of confidence" for Simsek and Erkan and

their more orthodox policies, he said.

In its recently unveiled economic road map, Turkiye aims to become a high-income country, with a GDP of over \$1.3 trillion and per capita national income of \$14,855, by 2026.

The new medium-term economic plan includes reforms to public finances, trade, the investment environment, employment, human capital and disaster management. Simsek said Erdogan was fully behind the program.

However, experts like Wolfango Piccoli, co-president of London-based Teneo Intelligence, said that while the World Bank loan agreement was meaningful, it was

"nothing close to a possible standby agreement" with the International Monetary Fund.

"Leaving aside the size of the package from the World Bank, a deal with the IMF would greatly boost investors' confidence in Turkiye," he told Arab News.

An IMF deal would also add transparency to the country's public finances, including the guarantees provided by the Treasury for public-private partnership projects, and require agenda reforms that were politically unpalatable to the government, Piccoli said.

"The \$18 billion in loans from the World Bank cannot achieve anything like that. I think most of

the funds will be used for the reconstruction of the areas devastated by the earthquake," he said.

"It is good news for Turkish firms who may be able to secure loans and guarantees from the World Bank but for foreign investors the package is unlikely to move the needle."

Selva Demiralp, a professor of economics at Koc University in Istanbul, said the World Bank deal did appear to be a show of support for Turkiye's post-election economic plans.

"Turkiye has a strong potential to rise once it adopts correct policies to address its macroeconomic imbalances," he told Arab News.

"The evident abandonment of the policies that were implemented before the election is a strong step in the right direction. (However,) I have questions regarding the sustainability of the program that is laid out by the OVP (medium-term economic program).

"The World Bank seems more convinced. Then again, we are not present at investor meetings ... so I cannot tell what will be different this time around by just looking at the OVP," he said.

"Talking to the politicians directly might provide a clearer picture than what is hidden in the mid-term targets laid out in the program. It is true that the internal consistency of the OVP is much improved. Nevertheless, the document is notorious for missing its targets.

"The growth targets seem ambitious if the disinflation path will hold, for example," Demiralp said. "It might be possible with significant capital inflows, and the World Bank loan could be an important step in this direction. But that alone won't be sufficient given that the toll of the earthquake itself is close to \$100 billion."

Meanwhile, leaders from the world's top economies, including Turkiye and Saudi Arabia, convened in India on Friday for a two-day G20 summit.

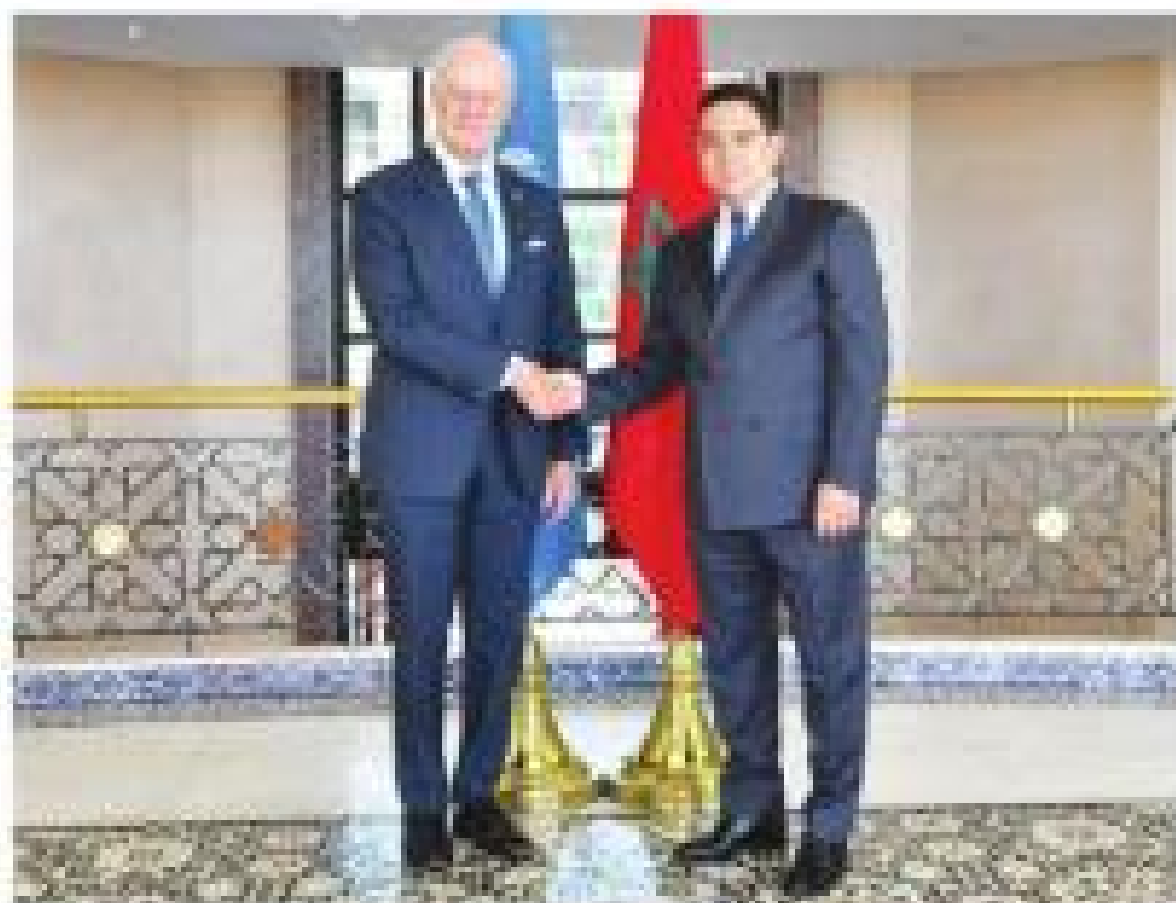
DIPLOMACY

Morocco demands W. Sahara deal 'based exclusively' on its plan

AFP Rabat

Morocco's top diplomat told the UN envoy for Western Sahara on Friday that any settlement of the decades-old dispute must be "based exclusively" on its autonomy plan.

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura had traveled to the former Spanish colony on Monday for his first visit since taking office and met elected officials, and dignitaries and tribal chiefs. His visit to the government-controlled cities



Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita with UN envoy Staffan de Mistura. Supplied

of Laayoune and Dakhla saw him hold talks with independence activists as well as supporters of union with Morocco, Moroccan media reported.

Morocco has been emboldened by US recognition of its annexation of the territory, granted by the Donald Trump administration in late 2020 in return for its normalization of relations with Israel.

In his talks with the UN envoy on Friday, Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita insisted that the only settlement Rabat would accept

for the contested territory was autonomy within Morocco, not the independence the Algerian-backed Polisario Front has been pushing for since the last years of Spanish rule in the 1970s.

Bourita's delegation called for "a political solution based exclusively on the Moroccan autonomy plan, in the framework of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the kingdom," a Foreign Ministry statement said.

A UN mission has been deployed in Western Sahara since 1991,

tasked with organizing a referendum on the territory's future provided for by a ceasefire agreement between Morocco and the Polisario that year.

The referendum has never taken place, and in late 2020 the Polisario announced it was resuming fighting.

Morocco controls around 80 percent of Western Sahara, including all its main resources and population centers, while the Polisario controls a swath of the desert interior.

RELIEF

Israel to reopen main cargo crossing to Gaza on Sunday

AP Jerusalem

Israel announced plans to reopen the Gaza Strip's main cargo crossing on Sunday after closing it earlier this week, claiming authorities had found explosives headed out of the embattled territory.

The closure was a severe economic blow to producers across the coastal strip.

The Kerem Shalom crossing was closed on Monday after authorities said they found the explosives hidden in a clothing shipment bound for the occupied West Bank — one of the main markets for Gaza's tiny export sector. Officials feared the explosives were intended for militants in the

West Bank.

After an investigation and "necessary adjustments," the crossing was deemed safe to reopen, said COGAT, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs.

Palestinian fishermen, businessmen and rights advocates said the closure marked a form of collective punishment against Gaza's 2 million people, including tens of thousands of laborers who heavily depend on exports to Israel and the West Bank to stay afloat.

Nearly all the goods that enter and exit Gaza pass through Kerem Shalom.

Challenges faced by Gaza's



Palestinian fishermen check a net at a beach in Gaza City. AFP

fisherman during the closure were particularly acute. Their surplus stock perished before it could reach markets in Israel.

Gaza's main fishermen's union reported \$300,000 in losses due to the closure, a significant blow. Fish accounted for 6 percent of all Gazan exports in July.

The reopening promises a reprieve for fishermen like Khalid Al-Laham, a 35-year-old father of five who lives in the southern city of Khan Younis. Al-Laham was forced to borrow food from shops to feed his family during the closure.

"The financial and living conditions will certainly improve," Al-Laham said.



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro says his visit to China is aimed at 'strengthening cooperation and the construction of a new world order.'



Plainclothes officials and police look at a landslide covering a road at Yiu Tung Estate in Shau Kei Wan in Hong Kong on Friday following heavy rains. AFP

CLIMATE CHANGE

Hong Kong hit by heaviest rainstorm in 140 years

Deluge leaves the city's streets and some subway stations under water

AFP Hong Kong

Hong Kong was flooded by the heaviest rainfall in nearly 140 years on Friday, leaving the city's streets under water and forcing its schools to close.

Just across the border, authorities in China's tech hub Shenzhen recorded the heaviest rains since records began in 1952.

Climate change has increased the intensity of tropical storms, experts say, with more rain and stronger gusts leading to flash floods and coastal damage.

The heavy rains in Hong Kong started on Thursday and in the hour leading up to midnight, the city's weather observatory recorded hourly rainfall of 158.1mm at its headquarters, the highest since records began in 1884.

On Friday afternoon, the Hospital Authority said at least 110 people were hospitalized due to injuries, with four in serious condition.

A man was found unconscious off the shore of western Hong Kong Island and declared dead at

the hospital, though authorities were still investigating if the death was flood-related.

The city's highest rainstorm warning level, "black," was hoisted for a record-breaking 16 hours before being lowered at 3:40 p.m. Friday, with rainfall mostly easing by late afternoon.

"It's absolutely shocking," said Jacky, 52, who lives in the Wong Tai Sin district with his elderly parents. "I don't remember floods ever being this bad in our district."

He added: "The bottom floor of the mall is completely flooded, the water level is higher than the storefronts ... it's turned our day into chaos."

Authorities issued flash flood warnings, with emergency services conducting rescue operations in parts of the territory.

"Residents living in close proximity to rivers should stay alert to weather conditions and should consider evacuation" if their homes are flooded, the observatory said.

It also warned of potential landslides, telling motorists to "keep away from steep slopes or retaining walls."

Hong Kong's stock exchange canceled all trading sessions on Friday. Hong Kong Chief Secretary Eric Chan described the deluge as "a once-in-a-century heavy rainstorm."

"It's like putting four bathtubs of water into one bathtub ... it will spill," Chan said at a press conference, when asked if the



It's like putting four bathtubs of water into one bathtub ... it will spill.

Eric Chan
Hong Kong chief secretary

government had done enough to prevent flooding.

The Hong Kong Observatory said it recorded more than 600 mm of rainfall at its headquarters over 24 hours — roughly a quarter of the city's annual average.

Earlier in the day, taxis struggled through flooded roads as commuters attempted to make their way to work, with some cars stranded in the deluge.

"It felt like the whole neighborhood was isolated by the floodwater. One of the underground car parks is totally under water," said Olivia Lam, who lives on the eastern side of Hong Kong Island.

"The water was almost waist-deep outside my building, and that's not the worst (case) in the neighborhood."

An AFP reporter saw boulders and mud from a landslide block off a two-lane road in the Shau Kei Wan district, with mud also spilling over into a nearby basketball court.

Residents of a public housing block just 30 meters from the landslide lined up with buckets to collect fresh water after the building's supply was disrupted.

Roads were also flooded on the island of Lantau, where rivers swelled over their banks.

Southern China was hit the previous weekend by two typhoons in quick succession — Saola and Hailui — though Hong Kong avoided a feared direct hit.

Tens of millions of people in the densely populated coastal areas of southern China had sheltered indoors ahead of those storms.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

'Interference' rapped

Singapore issues warning to top British journalist

Singapore accused a veteran British journalist of interfering in domestic politics, issuing him a warning after he publicly endorsed a local independent media outlet.

The Ministry of Communications and Information said it had issued a warning to Dominic Ziegler, the Singapore bureau chief of The Economist magazine.

Ziegler, a British national, participated in an unpaid ad campaign for Jom, a weekly digital magazine launched last year that reports on local politics and culture. The ministry said it expected Ziegler not to repeat his actions. His actions "clearly crossed the line from reporting on Singapore to participating in Singapore's domestic affairs," the ministry said in a statement. **AFP**

Rail cables damaged

Police probe 'political arson' in Germany

Police opened an investigation Friday after conduits holding railway cables went up in flames in a suspected politically motivated crime that seriously disrupted train traffic in northern Germany.

Fire had broken out at three locations in the Hamburg region.

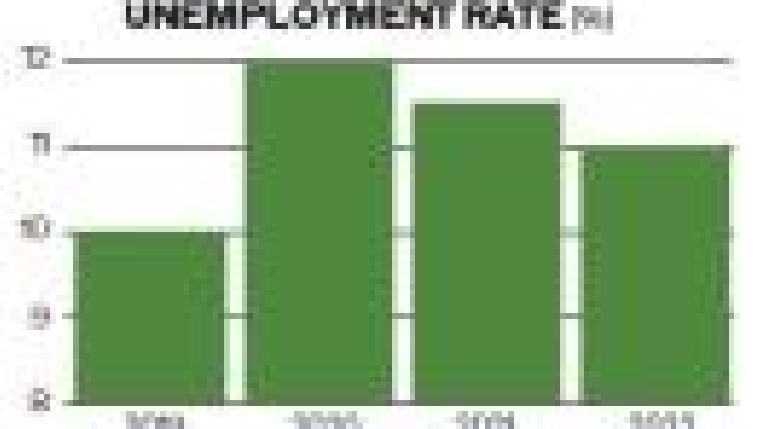
Investigators "believe that the fires were set deliberately," said police from the port city in a statement.

"Police believe that a political motive lies behind the crime and are seeking witnesses," they added.

The damage wrought chaos on local and long-distance rail traffic, with several trains on the busy Berlin-Hamburg line canceled, while other connections faced long delays. **AFP**

The Day's FIGURES

NICARAGUA: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)



Source: Statista

What We Are Reading Today

FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

Beyond the Wall

KATJA HOYER

This is a brilliantly written and researched piece of work. It provides a comprehensive insight and understanding of what life was like in the German Democratic Republic.

Author Katja Hoyer sheds light on the multifaceted aspects of its history, society and political landscape.

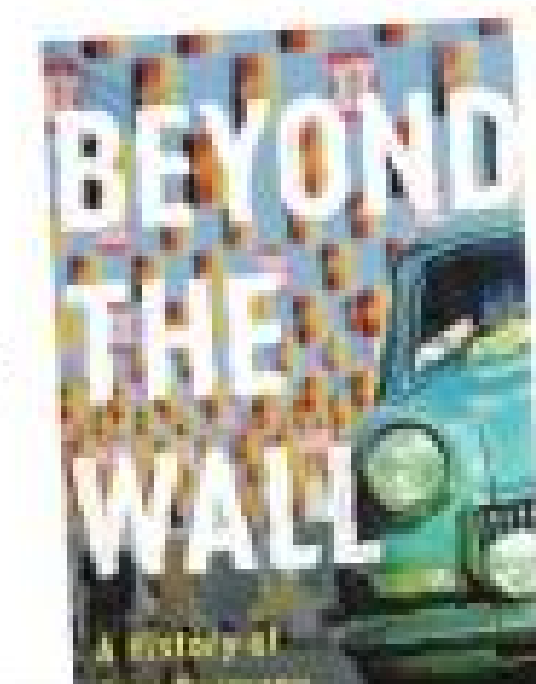
Hoyer's work stands out for its thoroughness and attention to detail.

"With a nuanced analysis and a wealth of primary sources, Hoyer presents a valuable contribution to the literature on the GDR, providing us

with a deeper understanding of this complex and tumultuous period," said a review on Goodreads.com.

She skillfully navigates the chronology of the GDR, from its establishment in 1949 to its dissolution in 1990, and examines key political events, economic policies, and social dynamics.

By drawing on an extensive range of primary sources, including archival documents, oral histories, and contemporary media, Hoyer paints a vivid and comprehensive picture of life in the GDR, the review said.



Unveiling ceremony

'Tactical nuclear attack submarine' from N. Korea

North Korea has launched its first "tactical nuclear attack submarine," state media reported, although the South Korean military said the vessel might not be operational.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presided over the unveiling ceremony, saying the sub was part of a "push forward with the nuclear weaponization of the navy," according to state news agency KCNA.

Images in state media showed Kim, wearing a light suit and sun hat, speaking to white-uniformed sailors next to the submarine, whose bow was decorated with the North Korean flag.

During the launch ceremony, which involved confetti and balloons, Kim said the submarine is "one of core underwater offensive means of the naval force of the DPRK." **AFP**

UK prison security row

Police probe 'inside job' theory as suspect flees

Britain's top police officer on Friday said an investigation into how a terror suspect escaped from prison would look at whether he had help.

Former soldier Daniel Abed Khalife, 21, is believed to have strapped himself to the underside of a delivery van to flee Wandsworth prison on Wednesday. His disappearance has sparked a nationwide manhunt and an all-ports alert to prevent him from leaving the country.

On Friday morning, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mark Rowley said the hunt was focused on sprawling Richmond Park, near Wandsworth, in south London.

He said that the escape was "clearly pre-planned."

Khalife's escape has prompted wider questions about security at UK prisons. **AFP**

'GREAT FRIENDS'

Philippines, Australia sign strategic partnership deal

AP, AFP Manila

Australia and the Philippines elevated their seven-decade ties to a strategic level on Friday to broaden an alliance underpinned by their rejection of China's increasingly provocative actions in the disputed South China Sea.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Philippine President Marcos Jr. signed the pact upgrading their ties in Manila. They also agreed to hold an annual meeting of their defense chiefs.

Aside from an aim to further boost trade and economic engagement, Albanese said their countries "have common views about the need to uphold international law, and Australia's position on that

will continue to be consistent, as we have always been, including recently over issues relating to the South China Sea."

China and the Philippines, along with Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei, have been locked in a decadeslong territorial standoff in the disputed waterway.

It's a key passageway for global trade and is regarded as an Asian flashpoint.

It's also where China has repeatedly had tense face-offs with Philippine vessels.

Marcos said he and Albanese "acknowledge that our shared values, the democratic principles and mutual respect for international law, have been instrumental in fostering a strong partnership."

SPEEDREAD

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the two countries as 'great friends' and expressed hope that his visit would help take the relationship 'to an even higher level.'

Marcos said: "Our commitment to these ideals has guided our path forward as we address the complex challenges facing our region and the world at large."

Albanese described the two countries as "great friends" and expressed hope that his visit would help take the relationship "to an even higher level."

In just-concluded summit talks

attended by Albanese, Marcos, and several other Western and Asian leaders on Thursday in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, the Australian premier underscored Canberra's recognition of — and the need to uphold — a 2016 arbitration ruling by a tribunal set up under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea that invalidated China's expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea on historical grounds.

The Philippines sought the arbitration after China forcibly took control of a disputed shoal after a tense 2012 sea standoff.

China did not participate in the arbitration, rejected its outcome as a sham, and continues to violate it.

مَنْ كَانَ عَاقِلًا لَمْ يَسِرْ إِلَّا غَافِلًا
(ابن المعتز)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB
He who is rational is always carefree.
Ibn Al-Mu'tazz
(Abbasid-era poet)

Opinion

Is America reverting to isolationism?

JOSEPH S. NYE JR.



Joseph S. Nye Jr. is a professor at Harvard University and a former US assistant secretary of defense.
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The first debate between the Republican Party's candidates for next year's US presidential election revealed major schisms over foreign policy. While former Vice President Mike Pence and former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley defended America's support for Ukraine in Russia's war of aggression, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy expressed skepticism. Former President Donald Trump — the unquestioned front-runner — skipped the event, but he too has objected to US involvement in that conflict.

Polls show that rank-and-file Republicans are as divided as the candidates. That raises concerns that if an isolationist Republican wins in 2024, it could mark a turning point for the US-dominated international order established at the end of the Second World War.

Historically, American public opinion has oscillated between extroversion and retrenchment. Having witnessed the tragic consequences of the isolationism of the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the process that culminated in the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions in 1944 and the UN in 1945. President Harry Truman's postwar decisions then led to permanent alliances and a continual US military presence abroad. The US invested heavily in European reconstruction through the Marshall Plan in 1948, created NATO in 1949 and led the UN coalition that fought in Korea in 1950.

These actions were part of a realist strategy

to contain Soviet power. But containment was interpreted in various ways and Americans later had bitter, often partisan debates over interventions in developing countries like Vietnam and Iraq. Still, while the ethics of intervention were called into question, the value of sustaining a liberal institutional order was much less controversial. As the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr once observed, the "fortunate vagueness" of liberal internationalism had saved it from succumbing to ideological rigidity.

The liberal international order thus enjoyed broad support in US foreign policy circles for decades after the Second World War. But in the 2016 presidential election, Trump's argument that the post-1945 alliances and institutions had benefited others at America's expense resonated strongly with many voters. To be sure, his populist appeal rested on more than an attack on US foreign policy. He also tapped into widespread anger over the economic dislocations caused by globalization and the post-2008 Great Recession and exploited polarizing cultural changes related to race, the role of women and gender identity. But by blaming economic problems on trade deals with countries like Mexico and China and on immigrants competing for jobs, Trump successfully linked nativist resentment to US foreign policy.

Of course, Trump was not the first to apply this formula. The current populist response had antecedents in the 1920s and 1930s. More than 15 million immigrants came to the US during the first two decades of the century, sowing fears among many white Americans

that they were being overwhelmed. In the early 1920s, a resurgent Ku Klux Klan helped push through the National Origins Act to "prevent the Nordic race from being swamped" and to preserve the older, more homogeneous America. Similarly, Trump's election in 2016 reflected, rather than caused, the deep racial, ideological and cultural rifts that had been developing since the 1960s.

While many analysts worry that American retrenchment could result in the kind of international disorder that plagued the 1930s, Trump supporters argue that his administration's less generous and tougher stance produced greater stability abroad and support at home. Whatever the case, Trump's election represented a clear shift away from the liberal tradition.

Some believe that Trump's rise was caused by the failure of liberal elites to reflect the underlying preferences of the American people. But that is facile. Of course, there are many strands of American public opinion and elite groups are generally more interested in foreign policy than the public at large. Nonetheless, we do have a good sense of where the public has stood over time.

Since 1974, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs has surveyed Americans on whether it is better to play an active global role or to stay out of world affairs. Over that period, roughly a third of the public, harkening back to the 19th-century tradition, has been consistently isolationist. That number reached 41 percent in 2014; but, contrary to popular myth, 2016 was not a high point of post-1945 isolationism. At the time of the election, 64 percent of

Americans said they favored active involvement in world affairs, and that number rose to 70 percent in 2018 — the highest recorded level since 2002.

Although full-scale 1930s-style isolationism is highly unlikely, many analysts still worry that a failure to support Ukraine could signal a return to American retrenchment, auguring a serious weakening of the international order. Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion was a blatant violation of the UN Charter. If Russia prevails in occupying Ukrainian territory, it will have undercut the liberal principle prohibiting the use of force to alter a country's borders. The solidarity among NATO countries in applying sanctions and supplying military equipment to Ukraine thus is not only moral, but also practical and realistic.

The outcome in Ukraine will have serious implications for the future of Europe and the wider world. Although Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping entered a "no-limits" partnership just before the invasion, China has been cautious, so far, in offering material support to Russia. Chinese leaders are doubtless concerned about Putin's risk-taking and worried that the alliance is proving too costly to Chinese soft power. If Putin prevails, however, China may conclude that taking such risks pays off — a lesson that will not have been lost on the rest of the world, either.

Those arguing that America does not have an important national interest in helping Ukraine are wearing historical blinders. Their naïveté (if not bad faith) should disqualify them from seeking the presidency.

Many analysts worry that American retrenchment could result in the kind of international disorder that plagued the 1930s

The Lebanese situation...



One of the main consequences of the Ukraine war is that it has led Moscow to turn away from the Caucasus

Turkish-Iranian rivalry simmers in the Caucasus

SINEM CENGİZ



Sinem Cengiz is a Turkish political analyst who specializes in Turkey's relations with the Middle East.
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At a meeting in Tehran last Sunday with new Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi stressed the need to stand against the presence of "foreign parties" in the Caucasus, calling for cooperation and negotiation to settle differences.

The Iranian president's strong emphasis on the foreign presence in this region should be understood within a broader context that includes both Tehran's foreign policy toward the Caucasus and the perception of Türkiye's role there.

The South Caucasus, comprising Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, has often been prone to instability and tension. What makes the situation more complicated is that these small countries are surrounded by larger neighbors, namely Türkiye, Iran and Russia, which have high stakes in the region.

As a consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020, which ended with a victory for Azerbaijan over Armenia thanks to Türkiye's support, Iran's influence in the region started to fade. Meanwhile Russia is tied up on the Ukraine front, meaning it now has less influence on developments in the Caucasus. For Iran, one of the main consequences of the Ukraine war is that it has led Moscow to turn away from the

Caucasus, throwing off the delicate geopolitical balance in favor of Türkiye.

Moreover, despite having fragile relationships with both Russia and Iran, Türkiye is ultimately a NATO member state that is increasing its role and influence in the Caucasus, historically considered as Russia's backyard. And greater influence in Azerbaijan provides a gateway for Ankara to extend its reach beyond the Caucasus, toward the Caspian Sea and further into Central Asia. Thus, Iran aims to limit Türkiye's influence and somehow try to reshape the balance in the Caucasus according to its own national interests.

It is no secret that there is an ongoing strategic rivalry between Iran and Türkiye for power and influence in the Caucasus — and this rivalry has an ethnic dimension that even threatens the borders in this region.

Empowered by victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, Azerbaijan has increased its rhetoric regarding the protection of Azeris in Iran. President Ilham Aliyev's statements identifying them as "part of its people" have irked Tehran. Azerbaijan has also launched military drills near the Iranian border, which irritated Tehran. For Iran, the border with Azerbaijan is perceived through a security perspective. Iran's military exercises near the border in 2021 and 2022 should be evaluated in this context, as they were an apparent warning to Baku not to annex

key Armenian land.

In addition, Azerbaijan's deepening relations with Israel have been a main source of contention between Baku and Tehran. In late March, Azerbaijan opened an embassy in Israel for the first time — a move that followed a rise in military relations between the two countries. In early April, Azerbaijan expelled four Iranian diplomats, resulting in Tehran's reciprocal action a month later. Thus, Nagorno-Karabakh became the turning point for Tehran, which is well aware that Azerbaijan's victory against Armenia could not have been achieved without Turkish and Israeli support and Russia's inability to prevent Armenia's defeat. Now, Iran sees a weak Armenia that seeks rapprochement with Türkiye, while an empowered Azerbaijan cultivates closer ties with Israel and Ankara aims to shape the developments in the region in its favor.

Despite the diminishing Russian influence in the region, the US does not seem to want to fill that vacuum. This is due to two factors. The first is that Azerbaijan is not an actor that would rely on the US at the expense of its close ties with Moscow. Secondly, for the US, with its pivot to Asia strategy, the tension-prone Caucasus is not a priority. This automatically leaves the region to two Middle Eastern powers: Iran and Türkiye.

Within this context, Iran is trying to rely on

its diplomatic skills to manage its tacit rivalry with Türkiye. In its latest diplomatic foray into Caucasus politics, Iran endorsed peace talks between Baku and Yerevan. In so doing, it aimed to achieve the following goals: to ease heightened tensions with Azerbaijan, to avoid pushing Baku further toward Israel, and to protect its interests in the Caucasus. For many years, Tehran kept a relatively low profile in this region in order to avoid provoking a Russian reaction. However, it now lacks the leverage that Türkiye, or even Russia, has on Azerbaijan.

The Iranian-Turkish rivalry in the Caucasus also has an economic dimension. Türkiye's efforts to link up with Central Asia via the Caspian Sea are perceived as a direct challenge to Iranian economic interests. The Zangezur corridor, which is part of a larger project aimed at connecting Baku to Istanbul via Armenian land, is a good example in this regard.

Iran's continuous emphasis on the "foreign presence" and its warnings against "border changes" and the "blocking of existing transit routes" in the South Caucasus should be read while taking into account all of these dimensions. Thus, Iranian foreign policy toward the region is intertwined with its domestic security and the regional balance of power.

Opinion

Why Ukraine's new defense minister will never give up on Crimea

LUKE COFFEY



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Ukraine's parliament last week confirmed the appointment of Rustem Umerov as Minister of Defense. He replaces Oleksii Reznikov, who had been in office since November 2021 and was credited for persuading Europe and the US to provide billions of dollars in military aid to help Ukraine after Russia's invasion last year.

Despite that, President Volodymyr Zelensky said that after more than 18 months of war the ministry needed "new approaches and other formats of interaction with both the military and society as a whole."

For Zelensky at least, Umerov is the answer. The appointment sends three important messages to the international community.

First, it shows that Zelensky continues to be a robust and confident leader willing to act in the best interests of his country. Umerov is a member of an opposition political party. Zelensky could have easily appointed a new defense minister from his own party. Instead, he put the national interest first and selected the best person for the job, despite any political differences.

Second, the dismissal of Reznikov demonstrates to the Western backers of Ukraine that Zelensky is serious when it comes to tackling corruption. There is no suggestion that Reznikov was linked to any corruption activities. However, as minister, he was responsible for everything that went well or went badly inside his department. There have been several recent high-profile corruption allegations inside

the ministry. Umerov has a good reputation as an anti-corruption activist. With Western policymakers worried about corruption in Ukraine, replacing Reznikov at this time sends the right signal.

Finally, since Umerov is a Crimean Tatar, the most significant message sent by his appointment is the importance Zelensky places on liberating all of Ukraine's territory from Russia, including Crimea.

The Crimean Tatars are the indigenous people of Crimea. They are ethnically Turkic and religiously Sunni Muslim, and have faced decades of religious and political persecution. The Crimean Khanate, a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire, survived for more than 300 years until Catherine the Great took control of the peninsula in 1783. In the chaos that followed the Bolshevik Revolution and Russia's civil war, the peninsula was finally incorporated

into the Soviet Union. The Soviets never had the well-being of the Crimean Tatars in mind. In the 1920s, Lenin reportedly wrote about his plans for them: "We will take them, divide them, subjugate them, digest them."

Under Stalin's iron-fisted rule, the Crimean Tatars were almost annihilated. Stalin claimed that they were enemies of the state after accusing them of siding with Nazi Germany during the Second World War. In fact, many Crimean Tatars bravely fought against Nazism: Eight won the Hero of the Soviet Union award, the country's highest distinction — and Amet-Khan Sultan, a Crimean Tatar pilot, won it twice. In 1944, almost 180,000 Crimean Tatars were

forcibly removed from their homes in Crimea and shipped east under the orders of Stalin. During this forced removal, tens of thousands were killed. Families were separated. Many ended up in Uzbekistan. In fact, Umerov was born in Samarkand in Uzbekistan to a Crimean Tatar family who were deported from Crimea.

The Crimean Tatars were allowed to return to Crimea during Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika reforms in the 1980s. However, in the aftermath of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Crimean Tatars faced new challenges. Security services have raided homes and offices of prominent Crimean Tatars on dubious pretenses. The Tatar Mejlis (a legislative body for the Tatars working to restore the national and political rights of the Crimean Tatar people) was closed. Moscow banned annual ceremonies marking the mass deportation of the Crimean Tatars by Stalin in 1944. Russia has also banned select pieces of Crimean Tatar literature.

On his first day as Defense Minister Umerov wrote: "For my family and the Crimean Tatar people, the war with Russia began several centuries ago, when Moscow first occupied my native Crimea. I was born after my family had been deported, and as a child lived through the hardships brought about by Russian colonialism, which attempted to make indigenous Crimean Tatar people feel as though they were aliens on their own land. They did not succeed back then, and they will never succeed." For Umerov, the war is not just one of national survival for Ukraine — it is a struggle

for his personal identity as a Crimean Tatar.

Umerov's appointment also creates new opportunities in the Middle East. He knows the Gulf region well. He was part of the Ukrainian delegation that traveled to Jeddah for the peace summit last month. He also traveled with Zelensky to Saudi Arabia last May for the Arab League summit. Last March, he accompanied first lady Olena Zelenska on a visit to the UAE. His appointment could usher in a new era on defense cooperation between Ukraine and the Gulf states. This is especially true in the context of countering Iranian drones and Ukraine's

advancements in seabornedrone capabilities that have proved effective in the Black Sea.

Under international law, Crimea is part of Ukraine. Any settlement to the war that does not bring Crimea back under Kyiv's control sets a dangerous precedent. The last time a country used military force to annex the territory

of another was when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990. Another good comparison of Russia's occupation of Crimea is Iran's control over the three UAE islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, and the presence there of the Revolutionary Guards navy.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine is ready to negotiate an end to the fighting. The war is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Recent polling shows that less than 5 percent of Ukrainians are willing to make territorial concessions to Russia. The Ukrainian people want all of their land returned, including Crimea. Umerov's appointment was therefore the right decision at the right time.

The most significant message sent by his appointment is the importance Zelensky places on liberating all of Ukraine's territory

For Umerov, the war is not just one of national survival for Ukraine — it is a struggle for his personal identity as a Crimean Tatar

Soviet-trained regimes have the upper hand in disinformation

NADIM SHEHADI



Nadim Shehadi is a Lebanese economist. Twitter: @Confuseuse

The obviously false rumor that a mosque is to be built on the first floor of the Eiffel Tower has been circulating in various forms since 2011. It is wrong to assume that only the simple-minded can be taken in by fake news, as this was sent to me by a very sophisticated friend with a doctorate who had believed the story.

The story shared with me expressed outrage: A mosque will face the Muslim holy city of Makkah from the heart of Paris and its main landmark. How could Anne Hidalgo, the socialist mayor of the city, allow this?

The story is not true of course; it is part of a malicious disinformation campaign adding fuel to a situation that is already in flames. The latest context is this summer's French protests, in which the participation of young people of North African descent was widely highlighted. It also comes at a time when the far right in Europe is raising the alarm about immigrants and refugees from Syria and Afghanistan.

At an art gallery in the little harbor town of Rockport, Massachusetts, while admiring a very colorful painting of the city of Prague, I met its painter, Larry Martin. I told him my memory of Prague was of darker colors, more like gothic black and grey. He laughed and said that this was disinformation. His real name was Ladislav Bittman and he told me

his story over a long drink.

He had been the deputy commander of the department of disinformation in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, at the service of the communist party. After the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion of the country in 1968, he realized he had been on the wrong side and defected to the US.

He explained to me the principles of spreading disinformation, which is different from promoting conspiracy theories. The idea is to bombard the West with semi-plausible pinpricks.

The objective is not necessarily to make people believe the stories, but to confuse them. The enemy is fed so much contradictory information that, in the end, it is unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood. His team had produced hundreds of such little stories, designed to mislead.

From time to time, they would produce a big, well-prepared lie that was high-impact. One such lie was when he took part in a TV documentary to explore the secrets of two lakes near the German border. It played on people's appetite to believe in the magic associated with the lakes in popular culture, as well as on the fact that the Austrians had been looking for hidden Nazi-era treasures in one of their lakes. The Black Lake and Devil's Lake were said to possess mysterious properties, such as that the bodies of people who drowned in them were preserved and never decomposed. They

named it Operation Neptune.

Divers came up with four trunks that were full of fake Nazi-era documents. The revelations implicated members of the West German government in Nazi war crimes and caused a political crisis. The hoax was so perfect that the documentary won international awards.

Bittman went on to teach at Boston University, where he created a center for the study of disinformation that included an archive of films and other propaganda material. The center was shut down for lack of funding after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Americans thought the Cold War was over and were unaware that the Russians had inherited the skills of their Soviet predecessors, which they would use in places such as Syria, and to manipulate Western elections. Part of what is interesting about this story is that disinformation

was efficient long before social media or the internet appeared, when more people read newspapers and wrote postcards and letters.

The Americans renewed their awareness of disinformation and fake news only after the presidential election of 2016. The principles remain the same, but far more sophisticated technology is now used, particularly on Facebook and Twitter.

Just last month, there were rumors that Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Russian oligarch and commander of the Wagner Group who died in a plane crash, might turn up at his own funeral.

This joke was in fact a reference to Prigozhin's involvement in fake news. He built an extensive bot farm operation that creates thousands of fake social media accounts, with operations all over Africa in tandem with Wagner's mercenary actions.

Richard Stengel, in his book "Information Wars," describes how inept the US has been at waging such wars. In the State Department where he was chief of public diplomacy, it sometimes took a week for a tweet to be published. Every bit of information produced

had to go through a rigorous vetting and validation process by the crippling bureaucracy, while at the same time a cyber-army in Russia would produce thousands of tweets containing disinformation.

We have also seen how the Syrian regime, with its Soviet-trained security establishment, has been

able to use disinformation to cast doubt on its use of chemical weapons against its own people. Some prominent academics, intellectuals and politicians in the West bought the story. Perhaps it is easier to fool them than the genuine salt-of-the-earth peasants who are still revolting against the regime.

American political scientist Lisa Wedeen has shown that, if a fake story is remotely plausible, then the effect is as if it had actually happened. The news about the mosque at the Eiffel Tower is fake, but it is as if it had happened because the outrage it triggers is real.

The enemy is fed so much contradictory information that, in the end, it is unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood

The Americans renewed their awareness of disinformation and fake news only after the presidential election of 2016

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The global trade finance funding gap has now widened to well over \$2 trillion, as the global economy still struggles to rebound from the pandemic.

Suzanne Gaboury
Director general for private sector operations at ADB



Business

OIL UPDATES

Crude ticks higher as tight supply trumps macroeconomic gloom

Dollar set to clock up its best winning streak since 2014, bolstered by a resilient run of US economic data

Reuters London

Oil prices hovered above \$90 a barrel on Friday, on track to end the week higher as investors chose to focus on tighter supply, despite broader macroeconomic uncertainty.

Both oil benchmarks hit 10-month highs earlier this week after Saudi Arabia and Russia extended their voluntary supply cuts of a combined 1.3 million barrels per day to the end of the year.

However, both benchmarks ended Thursday slightly lower amid volatile trade on multiple signals warning of weaker demand in the coming months.

Traders who took some profit on Thursday were back as they believe that the path of least resistance is certainly skewed to the upside, and oil prices are well on track to close another week in positive territory, said Naeem Aslam of Zay Capital Markets.

Brent crude futures were up 53 cents to \$90.45 a barrel by 16:08 Saudi time, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were up 39 cents at \$87.26 a barrel.

Both benchmarks closed up about 2 percent last week — at \$88.49 a barrel for Brent and \$85.02 a barrel for WTI — in anticipation of the cut announcements.

On the demand side, a key concern is China, the world's largest oil importer. The country has frustrated markets due to its sluggish post-pandemic recovery, while stimulus pledges have fallen short of expectations.

Data on Thursday showed overall Chinese exports and imports fell in August, as sagging overseas demand and weak consumer spending squeezed businesses.

However, even in times of lackluster economic activity, China tends to bolster its storage capacity, particularly with the availability of cheap Russian crude. Last month,



Both oil benchmarks hit 10-month highs earlier this week after Saudi Arabia and Russia extended their voluntary supply cuts of a combined 1.3 million barrels per day to the end of the year. Shutterstock

Chinese crude imports rose nearly 31 percent.

Demand for crude could also benefit from workers going on strike at projects in Australia which produce about 5 percent of the world's supply of liquefied natural gas.

Meanwhile, questions remain about whether central banks in the US and

BACKGROUND

Brent crude futures were up 53 cents to \$90.45 a barrel by 16:08 Saudi time, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were up 39 cents at \$87.26 a barrel.

Europe will continue their aggressive interest rate hike campaigns to tame persistent inflation.

On the global stocks markets, prices were subdued on Friday after prolonged pressure, with investors watching the contrasting fortunes of the dollar and yuan, and mulling central bank meetings and US data on the horizon.

US stock index futures were little changed.

The tech sector was in focus after about \$200 billion was wiped from Apple's market capitalization in two days on reports of China curbing iPhone use by state employees and on Friday protectionism fears were weighing on shares of suppliers.

Apple shares were flat in pre-market trading on Friday.

The dollar was set to clock up its best winning streak since 2014, bolstered by a resilient run of US economic data.

In contrast, the yuan fell to its weakest level since 2007 on worries about China's slowing economy.

Saudi logistics industry fuels economic transformation

SULIMAN ALMAZROUA



Suliman Almazroua is CEO of the National Industrial Development and Logistics Program.

With the launch of Vision 2030 in 2016, Saudi Arabia embarked on a profoundly ambitious journey to unlock its vast potential and transform itself into a diversified, sustainable and world-leading industrial nation.

Strategic investments in social and industrial infrastructure, as well as legal and financial reforms, are changing the Kingdom's cultural and economic landscape, opening the country to the world as a business hub and a tourist destination.

Unveiling multiple initiatives to diversify and strengthen the Kingdom's economy, Vision 2030 places special emphasis on developing the Kingdom's transport and logistics sector, identifying it as a critical pillar for progress.

Consequently, the National Industrial Development and Logistics Program was launched in 2019 to integrate four of the Kingdom's key economic drivers — energy, mining, industry and logistics — and maximize their contribution toward the nation's growth and economic diversification.

Since its inception, the program has facilitated investments of over \$100 billion to bolster Saudi industry and position the Kingdom as a gateway to local, regional, and global supply chains and markets. These investments have been well chosen, leading to a 16 percent year-on-year revenue growth from transport and logistics services.

In terms of actions, one of the most significant announcements was made in October 2022, when the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources launched the National Industrial Strategy.

Its goals are to triple industrial output and increase the value of the Kingdom's exports to over \$449 billion by 2030.

The strategy also lays out how the Kingdom will attract investment into the sector, boost economic diversification, increase non-oil exports and grow the Kingdom's gross domestic product.

But we are not resting on our laurels. To further accelerate growth in the logistics sector, the Ministry of Transport and Logistics Services is establishing 59 logistics zones across the Kingdom, out of which 21 were fully operational in 2022.

Also, the ministry will expand the 19 industrial zones into industrial logistics zones to accommodate the ever-increasing cargo traffic into and out of the country. These 19 zones are being developed through public-private partnerships and have attracted investments totaling \$27 billion. Over 1,500 permits were issued to local and foreign logistics companies in 2022 to bring these new areas to reality.

While enhancing connectivity with regional and global supply chains is central to the industrial strategy, the logistics zones will also support the growth and integration of the local supply chains.

The ministry is also strengthening local supply chains and integrating small and medium

enterprises with large strategic industries to maximize and develop local content in national products and their industrial value chains.

The government also announced signing agreements worth over \$267 million to boost private sector investment in domestic and global supply chains.

Further bolstering the local supply chain ecosystem, Saudi Prime Minister and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched another visionary initiative last year, the Global Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.

Attracting global industrial companies to the Kingdom, the GSCRI will support the growth of critical sectors and aims to secure \$10.6 billion in investments in its first two years.

Leveraging the Kingdom's resources, infrastructure and strategic location, the initiative strives to bring resilience to economies and companies across Europe, the Americas and Asia and overcome challenges faced by global supply chains while boosting the Kingdom's overall investment attractiveness globally.

Highly beneficial to logistics companies, GSCRI unlocks many business and investment opportunities for regional and international companies, with \$2.66 billion allocated in financial and non-financial incentives.

Economically, the Kingdom remains the largest market in the Gulf Cooperation Council region and one of the most important consumer markets in the Middle East and North Africa due to its

population and purchasing power. On the back of growing its global stature and diversifying revenue streams, the country's leadership is pursuing the development of all modes of transport and logistics — air, sea, rail and road.

Since the launch of NIDLP, the Kingdom's logistics sector has witnessed a rapid transition, with investments reaching \$559 million, which are being used to develop infrastructure, build operational efficiencies, forge government support and enhance local competencies and capabilities in the sector.

Making its presence felt in the global arena, the Kingdom climbed 17 positions in the latest global Logistics Performance Index 2023 published by the World Bank, claiming 38th rank among the 139 listed countries.

This change marks a significant elevation of Saudi Arabia from the 55th rank in the previous edition of the Index published in 2018.

Riding the wave of unprecedented transformation guided by Vision 2030, its able leadership and core economic initiatives, Saudi Arabia emerged as the fastest-growing G20 economy, reaching 8.7 percent growth last year. This position puts Saudi Arabia on track to become a top-15 economy by the end of the decade.

Strengthening trade ties with the region and creating a sustainable and thriving business ecosystem for international players, the Kingdom is set to unlock value and growth as it transforms at an unprecedented pace.

Business Saudi Arabia

COOPERATION

Saudi Development Fund signs \$53.33m deal to support Oman SMEs

Agreement is the latest by the SFD, which has been helping developmental projects across the globe since 1974

Arab News Riyadh

Small businesses in Oman are set to benefit from a \$53.33 million finance agreement signed by the country's development bank and the Saudi Fund for Development.

The funding is part of a larger \$150 million support program for Oman provided by the Kingdom through the SFD, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

The agreement was signed by the co-chairs of the Saudi-Omani joint committee, with Saeed Al-Qahtani from the SFD, and Zahir Al-Abri and Acting CEO of the Oman Development Bank Hamad Al Harthy representing the Omani side.

The deal aims to support the initiatives of the bank in the financing activities of small and medium enterprises, enhance social and economic growth, and create jobs in various states and governorates of Oman.

The agreement is the latest by the SFD, which has been contributing to developmental projects across the globe since its inception in 1974.

In August, the organization laid the foundation stone to mark the beginning of the construction of the Mangoky Bridge in Madagascar.

The SFD contributed \$20 million as a soft loan to the project, which is expected to reduce the travel time between the Atsimo-Andrefana and Menabe regions, home to the island nation's most vital agricultural and tourism assets.

Also in August, the fund inaugurated the King Abdullah



The funding is part of a larger \$150 million support program for Oman provided by the Kingdom through the Saudi Fund for Development. SPA

Campus of Azad Jammu and Kashmir University in Pakistan by allocating a grant of \$90 million for the project.

More than 10,000 students, faculty members, and employees are expected to benefit from the new facility, which aims to provide research opportunities and contribute to the sustainable

HIGHLIGHT

The deal aims to support the initiatives of the bank in the financing activities of small and medium enterprises, enhance social and economic growth, and create jobs in various states and governorates of Oman.

socio-economic development of Pakistan.

The project was inaugurated by the Saudi Fund for Development's director general of Asia operations, Saud bin Ayyed Al-Shammari, who was also accompanied by AJK President Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry.

Other recent initiatives from

the SFD include six loans to finance development projects in Madagascar worth \$69 million.

In January, the fund signed a deal with Pakistan's Economic Affairs Ministry to finance oil derivatives amounting to \$1 billion.

In the same month, the SFD also forayed into Caribbean countries by signing an \$80 million financing

agreement for the University of the West Indies expansion project at Five Islands in Antigua and Barbuda.

The financing deal aimed to reach sustainable development goals in the Caribbean, promote scientific innovation and add additional educational facilities to the university.

ROAD MAP

Saudi Arabia's economic and fiscal position strong due to Vision 2030: IMF

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's fiscal prospects are solid in the near term, primarily driven by Vision 2030 which has been steadily diversifying the Kingdom's economy since its launch in 2016, according to the International Monetary Fund.

In a press statement, the IMF noted that Saudi Arabia was the fastest-growing economy among G20 countries, achieving an overall growth rate of 8.7 percent.

According to the financial agency, the Kingdom has sufficient precautionary reserves and the peg of the exchange rate to the US dollar is serving the Saudi

economy well.

While much of the world has suffered from inflationary pressures, Saudi Arabia succeeded in maintaining its average consumer price index, the IMF said.

"Despite an uptick in early 2023 to 3.4 percent year on year, headline inflation is back at 2.8 percent year on year in May 2023, as declining contributions from transport and food prices offset the substantial increase in rent," said the IMF.

In line with its economic diversification goals, the Kingdom is spearheading the energy transition journey in the region through various initiatives such as the

Saudi Green Initiative, and the wider Middle East Green Initiative.

Affirming the progress of Saudi Arabia's sustainability journey, the IMF lauded the Kingdom's efforts to reduce carbon emissions, in line with its target to achieve net zero by 2060.

The executive board of the IMF also welcomed the non-oil revenue mobilization efforts undertaken by the Saudi government as a part of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

The agency also emphasized that the strength and flexibility of the banking system in the Kingdom are contingent upon the continuous development of the sector's infrastructure and the modernization of regulatory and supervisory frameworks.

HIGHLIGHT

Affirming the progress of Saudi Arabia's sustainability journey, the IMF lauded the Kingdom's efforts to reduce carbon emissions, in line with its target to achieve net zero by 2060.

Saudi Arabia succeeded in maintaining its average consumer price index, the IMF said. Shutterstock

This is further connected to the comfortable levels of liquidity that the banking system in Saudi Arabia enjoys, as well as the rapid digital transformation. Moreover, the IMF clarified that the system has not experienced direct repercussions from the banking crisis in the US and Europe.

In 2022, Saudi Arabia's non-oil gross domestic product witnessed a growth of 4.8 percent driven by robust private consumption and investments in

various sectors like wholesale, retail trade, construction and transport, the IMF added.

It also predicted that the non-oil GDP of Saudi Arabia will further grow by 4.9 percent in 2023 fueled by strong consumption spending.

In August, a report released by the General Authority for Statistics revealed that Saudi Arabia's inflation rate further fell to 2.3 percent in July from 2.7 percent in June.

The IMF also lauded Saudi Arabia's success in reducing the unemployment rate to historical lows, reaching 8 percent in 2022, increasing the female workforce and strengthening the Kingdom's banking sector.

INVESTMENTS

Ma'aden secures exploration licenses for key mining sites

Arab News Riyadh

In a bid to expedite its exploration initiative, the Saudi Arabian Mining Co., also known as Ma'aden, has secured licenses for the Muhaddad and Ar Ridaniyah sites.

As part of the company's bid submission, it has committed to investing SR15 million (\$4 million) in community initiatives benefiting citizens in both areas, with SR7.5 million allocated to each site.

This commitment includes the establishment of a training center designed to empower local youth in the region.



The issuance of exploration licenses will strictly adhere to the Mining Investment Law and its associated executive regulations. Shutterstock

Furthermore, the agreement mandates that over 60 percent of workers at the sites must be recruited locally, and it requires the execution of multiple exploratory

projects at both locations.

The Muhaddad exploration site, located in the Asir region, covers an area of 139 sq. km and contains reserves of copper, zinc, lead, and

gold.

On the other hand, the Ar Ridaniyah exploration site in the Riyadh region spans over 75 sq. km and holds significant zinc and silver deposits.

Jarrah Al-Jarrah, spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, said that the issuance of exploration licenses will strictly adhere to the Mining Investment Law and its associated executive regulations, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

These regulations mandate rigorous proof of technical competence and commitment to social

and environmental standards for all companies seeking various mining licenses, a significant step toward ensuring sustainable development within the country's mining sector, it added.

Al-Jarrah also noted that Ma'aden's offers outperformed the competition for both sites, demonstrating their superior suitability.

The Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources had previously announced the eligibility of 13 companies to participate in the competition for exploration licenses in the Muhaddad and Ar Ridaniyah sites, with five

companies and alliances ultimately applying for the licenses.

The issuance of new permits, announced by the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources on Wednesday, is a crucial development in the sector.

Launched last year, the ministry's Accelerated Exploration Program initiative aligns with the goals of Vision 2030 and the National Industrial Development and Logistics Program.

Its primary objective is to unlock the potential of the mining sector, aiming to position it as the nation's third industrial pillar.

In Saudi Arabia, we see that audiences continue to favor local channels with the highest trust still concentrated among offline channels.

Sagar Dhal
Media lead at Kantar Middle East



Media



This year's report also showed that in-person touchpoints dominate consumers' preferred channels with sponsored events taking the lead followed by cinema ads, point of sale, and out-of-home as well as digital out-of-home. Shutterstock

PREFERENCES

Amazon is consumers' top ad platform, finds study

Kantar Media Reactions 2023 report delves into attitudes of consumers and marketers, ad platforms and channels

Zaira Lakhpatwala Dubai

Amazon, for the second year in a row, is consumers' most preferred ad platform, while TikTok is the most "attention-grabbing," according to the Kantar Media Reactions 2023 report.

The annual study, conducted by marketing insights and analytics company Kantar, delves into the attitudes of consumers and marketers to ad platforms and channels.

The global study was conducted across 23 markets including Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt.

For consumers, the most-preferred ad platforms are Amazon, followed by Google, TikTok, Instagram and Spotify.

Among marketers, YouTube has jumped to the top of the list, improving trust by 6 percent year-on-year, followed by Google, Instagram, TikTok and Spotify.

Marketers favor YouTube and Google because they are established brands, even if the former does not rank in consumers' most-preferred ad platforms, according to the report.

While Instagram has moved up for consumers, it has gone down for marketers. Consumers find Instagram ads to be more fun and entertaining this year, but for marketers, the innovation of ads on Instagram has fallen 12 percent since 2021.

TikTok, on the other hand, is popular with both marketers and



While TV as a preferred channel is losing steam amongst global marketers, it remains a key channel in the Middle East and the lynchpin of ad campaigns for marketers in the region, so while online gains traction, traditional channels are here to stay.

consumers making it the most attention-grabbing ad platform, according to the research.

The app featured in the top five preferred ad platforms for both groups and was voted as the single best ad platform for capturing attention by both groups.

Elon Musk's X, formerly Twitter, has suffered "reputational damage" among marketers, according to the report, which shows a decline in perceptions of both innovation and trust.

Moreover, 14 percent of marketers said they will reduce their ad investment on the platform in 2024.

Artificial intelligence has been a buzzing topic in the media industry and both consumers (55 percent) and marketers (66 percent) are positive about it. However, it is still early days for AI in marketing, according to the report.

Another digital innovation that made waves last year was the metaverse with 61 percent of marketers claiming they would increase spending in the metaverse in 2023. However, the actual net increase was only 12 percent.

This year's report also showed that in-person touchpoints dominate consumers' preferred channels with sponsored events taking the lead followed by cinema ads, point of sale, and out-of-home as well as digital out-of-home.

Marketers, however, seem to be more focused on digital channels with the most preferred being online video, followed by sponsored events, digital-out-of-home, video streaming ads and online stories.

Television, which has historically been a marketer's favorite channel, was notably missing from the top five list, falling from third place last year to 12th in 2023.

Marketers' trust in TV ads is still high, but it has fallen 5 percent since 2021. The increase in trust in other channels combined with TV's lack of innovation has resulted in only 6 percent of marketers saying they will increase spend on TV in 2024.

"While TV as a preferred channel is losing steam amongst global marketers, it remains a key channel in the

FASTFACT

6%

Among marketers, YouTube has jumped to the top of the list, improving trust by 6 percent year-on-year, followed by Google, Instagram, TikTok and Spotify.

Middle East and the lynchpin of ad campaigns for marketers in the region, so while online gains traction, traditional channels are here to stay," said Sagar Dhal, media lead at Kantar Middle East.

"In Saudi Arabia, we see that audiences continue to favor local channels with the highest trust still concentrated among offline channels," he told Arab News.

In the UAE, TV is the most popular ad channel followed by out-of-home and digital out-of-home with consumers having a more positive attitude toward out-of-home ads, Dhal added.

Globally and in the Middle East, the report suggests a dissonance between consumers' and marketers' preferred platforms and channels.

"Both groups have a positive attitude towards digital-out-of-home, e-commerce, cinema and social media, but channels such as sponsored events, newspaper, magazines and TV show a variation in attitudes; consumer expectations are skewed towards these channels whereas marketers are not," Dhal said.

He added that "marketers need to bridge this gap to address consumer expectations" and particularly in Saudi Arabia, "marketers need to focus on channels that matter for each campaign depending on the objective and not dilute the media mix per campaign."





I don't know how I did this good, but it happened and I'm very happy to take it.

Liu Rubcin, First-round leader
Queen City Championship

BASKETBALL

LeBron James makes young Saudi players starry-eyed during first Kingdom visit

- NBA top scorer also provided tips for emerging female players
- Kingdom's budding basketball athletes inspired and motivated

Arab News Riyadh

Global basketball legend LeBron James, in his first visit to Saudi Arabia, conducted a clinic this week for starry-eyed young Saudi Arabia players, including emerging stars from the women's national team.

Dr. Ghassan Tashkandi, president of the Saudi Basketball Federation, said: "We are incredibly honored to welcome LeBron James to Riyadh today. Seeing the reactions and smiles on the faces of all the players was priceless. His passion for the game, and willingness to take time to train with our players is a massive boost for our sport in Saudi."

"LeBron is a superstar, legend and hero all in one and someone who truly transcends sport worldwide. I've no doubt his visit today will have created memories for a lifetime for so many Saudi boys and girls who just had their dreams come true. Sports stars are so powerful in helping us inspire, unite and excite future athletes in Saudi Arabia — and they don't get bigger than the all-time leading scorer of the NBA," Tashkandi added.

As part of his visit to the Kingdom, James led a special clinic organized by the Saudi Arabia Basketball Federation at Al-Azem Academy, in the country's capital, Riyadh. The training session saw participants share the court with one of basketball's greatest players as they took on a series of dribbling and shooting workouts.

Starting out his NBA career two decades ago, James has one of the most impressive league records, having won four championships, four Most Valuable Player awards, four Finals MVP awards, two Olympic golds, and has been named an All-Star on a remarkable 19 occasions.



Aligned with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan, James' visit underscores the Kingdom's commitment to promoting healthier and more active lifestyles, as well as becoming a global destination for some of the biggest global events. Included among the major events is the FIBA 3X3 World Tour, which was hosted in the coastal city of Jeddah on two occasions and Diriyah last year.

The players struggled to find words to describe their feelings after meeting and playing basketball with their idol in their home

Emerging stars from the Saudi national women's team meet with the NBA's all-time leading scorer LeBron James at Alazem Academy in the Saudi capital city Riyadh. Supplied

country. "LeBron played an immense role in my life. I can't even begin to explain how happy I am to be here. I've aspired to be like him every single day growing up," said 16-year-old Ibrahim Qattan.

Teammate Abdullah Basha expressed similar feelings, saying: "Growing up as a kid you just see him on TV or on your phone

screen, so to see him here today doing his thing is just amazing. I thought I was dreaming and wanted someone to pinch me."

Al-Azem Academy player Aseel Falatah added: "As women, we now have countless opportunities to play sport in the Kingdom. The experience today doesn't even feel real. I honestly learnt so much from him."

Sports in Saudi Arabia is undergoing massive transformation with the number of federations increasing by over 50 percent in four years. Sports participation and physical activity amongst

adults has risen to 48 percent from just 13 percent in 2015.

Participation in basketball has increased 54 percent since 2018 thanks to a wide range of grassroots programs. There are now 240 athletes who make up the first generation of female basketball players.

The number of registered teams has also seen a huge uptick from 45 in 2018 to 105 in 2023, including 28 for females. Six male and female national teams are currently representing Saudi Arabia in regional and global tournaments.

PARTNERSHIP

International Olympic Committee reveals inclusion of 4 Saudi members

Arab News Riyadh

The International Olympic Committee has officially disclosed the names of individuals appointed to serve on various commissions within the organization.

The inclusion of the four distinguished Saudi figures emphasizes the robust partnership between the Olympic movement and Saudi Arabia, said Dr. Thomas Bach,

president of the IOC.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal maintains his position within the Revenues and Commercial Partnerships Commission, previously known as the Marketing Commission.

Prince Fahd bin Jalawi Al-Saud has been entrusted with a role on the Public Affairs and Corporate Communication Commission, formerly the Public Affairs

and Social Responsibility through Sport Commission.

Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud remains a member of the Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission, bringing her valuable perspective to this important area.

Additionally, Princess Reema keeps on the responsibilities of membership in the Coordination Commission for the Brisbane

2032 Olympics.

She has also been appointed to serve on the Sustainability and Legacy Commission, which the committee said was "a testament to Saudi Arabia's commitment to upholding Olympic values."

Abdulaziz Baashen has earned a place on the newly established Esports Commission, further strengthening Saudi Arabia's

engagement in diverse facets of the Olympic realm.

"These appointments underscore the deep and meaningful connection between Saudi Arabia and the International Olympic Committee, as well as the vital role played by Saudi national figures in recent years towards the development of the Olympic movement nationally and worldwide," the IOC said.

FIBA WORLD CUP

Germany stun US, seal final clash against Serbia

AP Manila

There will be no gold medal for the US at this World Cup. And for the second consecutive time in FIBA's biggest tournament, there might not be any medal at all for the Americans.

Instead, it's Germany on the cusp of a world title.

Andreas Obst scored 24 points, Franz Wagner added 22 and Germany shredded the US defense for much of the way in their first

win over the Americans — 113-111 in the World Cup semifinals on Friday night.

Obst hit the shot of the night, a 3-pointer with 1:15 left to put Germany up by four and just about snuff out a last-ditch US rally. Germany led for 30 of the game's 40 minutes, the US led for about 4 1/2, and there was little question who was controlling play much of the way.

"We knew the task at hand, and that was to go win," US guard Austin

Reaves said. "And we didn't do that."

The US, down by 10 midway through the fourth, nearly pulled off a comeback, getting within one point on two separate occasions in the final minutes. But the Americans never got the lead, and it was the Germans jumping and hugging as time expired.

Germany — the last unbeaten team left in the tournament at 7-0 — will play Serbia on Sunday (8:40 a.m. EDT) for the World Cup title. Serbia beat Canada in the first

semifinal, getting to their second World Cup final in the last three tournaments; they lost 129-92 to the US in the 2014 championship game.

Canada will play the US for bronze Sunday (4:40 a.m. EDT).

Anthony Edwards scored 23 points for the US (5-2), who got 21 from Reaves, 17 from Mikal Bridges and 15 from Jalen Brunson. The Americans shot 58 percent — but let Germany shoot 58 percent as well, and that was the ultimate undoing.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Football

Soncin is new coach of Italy women's team

Andrea Soncin was announced as the new coach of the Italy women's national team on Friday.

Soncin replaces Milena Bertolini, who stepped down after the Azzurre didn't advance from their group at the Women's World Cup.

The 45-year-old Soncin had led Venezia's men's youth team. The former striker also coached Venezia's men's team in Serie A on an interim basis.

Viviana Schiavi, a former player on the women's national team and coach of the under-16 women's squad, was named as Soncin's top assistant. She is seen as an eventual successor for the top job. **AP**

Prosecutors move

Luis Rubiales accused of sexual assault

Spanish public prosecutors demanded Friday that suspended football chief Luis Rubiales be indicted for sexual assault over his unsolicited kiss on the lips of player Jenni Hermoso at the Women's World Cup final.

"The prosecutors request that Luis Rubiales be questioned as an accused and Jenni Hermoso as a victim," the prosecutor's office said in a statement.

A judge at Spain's top criminal court must now decide whether to accept or archive the request.

If the judge accepts the request, an investigating magistrate will be assigned to head the investigation.

Under Spanish law, sexual assault includes a wide array of crimes from online abuse and groping to rape, each with different penalties. **AFP**



LPGA

Hot putter lifts China's Liu to Queen City lead

China's Liu Rubcin's hot putter helped her shrug off severe allergies and grab the first-round lead in the LPGA Queen City Championship on Thursday on 7-under par 65.

The 24-year-old needed just 27 putts in her bogey-free round at Kenwood Country Club in Cincinnati, Ohio, and admitted she hadn't expected to find herself at the top of the leaderboard — one stroke in front of Elizabeth Szokol, Dottie Ardina, Linnea Strom and Chien Peiyun.

"I don't know how I did this good, but it happened and I'm very happy to take it," said Liu, who said she was still "not clear" from the allergies that prompted her to withdraw from last week's Portland Classic. **AFP**

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Clark Backo stars in 'The Changeling,' now streaming on Apple TV+



Weekend Lifestyle, Art & Culture

EAT, PLAY, LOVE

Recipes for Success: Chef Gaurav Kakkar

The executive chef of Gymkhana in Riyadh offers advice and a chicken malai tikka recipe

Shyama Krishna Kumar Dubai

London's Michelin-starred Mayfair hotspot Gymkhana opened its first overseas outpost in Riyadh earlier this year and has already found itself a loyal following in the Kingdom.

The restaurant's Indian-born executive chef Gaurav Kakkar — who was instrumental in the pre-opening of Mövenpick Hotel Riyadh, followed by the pre-opening and rebranding of the 5-star voco Riyadh — is especially excited about the response it has received in Riyadh so far.

"We are blessed in a way that the locals and expats in Riyadh are no strangers to Indian cuisine. The response has been phenomenal. I'm enjoying it," Kakkar tells Arab News.

Kakkar credits his mother as one of the main inspirations behind his passion for cooking. But not in the way you might expect.

"Honestly, I got into cooking because my mother was a very bad cook," he says. "So, whenever my mom would cook, I'd eventually end up in the kitchen cooking something for myself. And then my father kind of encouraged me to experiment with a few things. And eventually I developed a knack for it."

Here, Kakkar talks about learning to cook with meat as a vegetarian, his working style and his love for Thai cuisine.

When you started out, what was the most common mistake you made?

I come from a vegetarian family. So the challenge used to be handling different kinds of meat. Also, back in the day, we didn't have access to classic European vegetables like asparagus or artichokes, so learning how to work with them was also a challenge. There's a big difference between knowing how to do something in theory and actually doing it in the kitchen.

What's your top tip for amateurs?

First of all, if you're cooking, then don't do it just to feed yourself. Cook because you're passionate about it, and because you enjoy eating. I also tell people not to be scared of experimenting in the kitchen; there's really no right or wrong.

What one ingredient can instantly approve any dish?

I don't think there's any one magic ingredient. It's about the freshness and the quality. That's the most important detail, whether it's a particular vegetable or a particular type of meat. Also, getting the right amount of seasoning, whatever that seasoning is, makes or breaks a dish.

When you go out to eat, do you find yourself critiquing the food? Or can you switch off and just eat?

Honestly, I can eat anything and everything. Anything that's nice and flavorful works for me; simple or complex doesn't matter. So I try not to get into critiquing, unless the it's extremely bad. But if it's fully prepared decently I'm not someone who goes out and picks apart other people's food.

What's your favorite cuisine?



Gaurav Kakkar (above) is the executive chef at Gymkhana in Riyadh (left), where the menu includes lamb shank Rogan Josh (top right) and Zafrani Angoori Rasamalai (above, right). Images supplied



I actually love Thai food and Thai flavors. In particular, I love the flavors of lemongrass, coconut and galangal. Because I lived in South India, I have an inclination towards South Indian cuisine and South Asian cuisines in general.

What's your go-to dish if you have to cook something quickly at home?

I love a simple khichdi (a dish of rice and lentils) with some nice Indian homemade pickle. My mom used to make khichdi, but it's not the typical runny one that's common in Indian households; it's cooked for a longer period of time and has this soft, deeply-cooked consistency. We like to keep it very simple and only add cumin, salt and turmeric.

As a head chef, what are you like? Are you a disciplinarian? Do you shout a lot? Or are you more laid back?

I'm not one particular category when it comes to work. When I bring someone into my team, I tell them very clearly what is expected, what is allowed and what is forbidden. So every team member knows all that. I've set the ground rules and I also make it very clear that communication is really, really important. So, they should not hide anything and they should be open about everything.

CHEF GAURAV'S MURGH MALAI TIKKA

INGREDIENTS:

For the first marinade: 800g fresh boneless chicken breast, 15g salt, 30g ginger garlic paste, 15ml fresh lemon juice

For the second marinade: 40g full fat labneh, 40ml full fat fresh cream, 40g Philadelphia cream cheese, 10g fresh coriander, chopped; 15g fresh Indian green chilis, chopped; 5g green cardamom powder

For the finishing: 20ml corn oil (for basting), 10g chaat masala, 10g ghee.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Clean the chicken breast to remove any sinew or excess fat, wash and pat dry.

2. Prick the chicken breast with a fork.
3. In a mixing bowl, marinate chicken with salt, lemon juice, ginger garlic paste. Leave for 30 mins.

4. In another mixing bowl, add all the ingredients for the second marinade and mix well.

5. Squeeze off any excess water from the chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces and add to the second



marinade. Mix gently until all pieces are evenly coated.

6. Place in a refrigerator for at least six hours.
7. Skewer the chicken pieces on a metal skewer roughly 1 cm apart.

8. Cook in a medium-hot tandoor or on a charcoal barbecue grill for around 5-8

minutes, or until 70 percent cooked.

9. Remove the skewer, baste with the corn oil and allow to rest for 3 minutes, allowing excess water and oil to drip off.

10. Now cook again in the tandoor or BBQ for 3-5 minutes until the chicken is evenly colored and cooked through. Remove the chicken from the skewer and plate.

11. Serve hot, sprinkled with chaat masala and ghee, accompanied by mint and coriander chutney.

Screen Scene

NEW TO WATCH AT HOME



The Changeling

Starring: LaKeith Stanfield, Adina Porter, Alexis Louder
Where: Apple TV+

Fantasy horror series based on Victor LaValle's novel of the same name. Second-hand book dealer Apollo Kagwa goes in search of his wife Emma after she commits an incomprehensible violent act following the birth of their first child.



Top Boy

Starring: Jasmine Jobson, Simbi Aikawa, Barry Keoghan
Where: Netflix

It's the final series of this excellent UK crime drama set in the fictional Summerhouse estate in Hackney, London. Following last season's shocking and violent climax, control of the estate's drug supply is up for grabs, and an Irish gang tries to muscle in.



Dear Child

Starring: Nalla Schuberth, Kim Riedle, Sammy Schrein, Hans Low
Where: Netflix

German-language drama series about a woman who was kidnapped and imprisoned in a house with two children. The series begins with her finally making her escape, but she is immediately put into grave danger. Can she elude her former captor?



Million Dollar Listing UAE

Starring: Ben Bandari, Zey Brown, Nassira Sekkay
Where: Starzplay

The luxury real estate reality show, a popular fixture in the US, gets a UAE version, which delves into the lives — both professional and personal — of five brokers as they attempt to persuade some extremely wealthy people to part with their money in exchange for some prime property in the Emirates.



Predators

Narrator: Tom Hardy
Where: Netflix

Five-part series presented from the point of view of some of the world's deadliest predators — including polar bears, lions, and cheetahs — as they fight to maintain their place at the top of the food chain.

Best & Worst *Ghallah Amin*

The Dubai-based Saudi model and TV host talks fake reality shows, exercise, and physics

Best TV show/film you've ever seen?

"The Office." During the summer, you don't want anything sad, so it's a nice light show to watch.

Worst TV show/film you've ever seen?

Reality shows. They're fake, but they act like it's someone's real life. I don't like the consequences of people believing they actually live like this.

Best personal style moment?

As I grow older, I understand my body more. So maybe my best personal style is now.

Worst personal style moment?

When I try to be someone I'm not — like, following a trend that doesn't suit me just to follow a trend.

Best fashion trend of 2023?

Monochrome looks. If you don't wear a lot of colors, it always looks very fancy.

Worst fashion trend of 2023?

Cargo pants. I don't like that



this trend is coming back at all. It doesn't suit all bodies.

Best book you've ever read?

"Who Moved My Cheese?" by Spencer Johnson. It was one of the first books I read as a teenager. It's about how, if you keep doing the same thing over and over again, your life will never change. I always remember that maybe I'm stuck because I keep repeating the same thing — it's not necessarily a mistake, just not changing your ways.

Worst book you've ever read?

I believe you can learn something

from any book you read.

Best thing to do when you're feeling low?

Walk, meditate or exercise. If you push yourself while you're exercising and you reach a goal you set for yourself, even a small one, then you feel like you've achieved something.

Worst thing to do when you're feeling good?

Stay up late. It ruins the whole next day.

Best holiday destination?

Capri, Italy. Everything is so beautiful. The food is really

good. The people are really nice. It's always special.

Worst holiday destination?

Anywhere super-hot. I don't like heat. Nothing above 29 degrees.

Best subject at school?

Chemistry. I was really good at it. Of course, I forgot all the equations, but I liked the periodic table.

Worst subject at school?

Physics. I just wasn't good at it. I didn't understand it. I don't know why. I understood math and I was good at it. But I hated physics and Arabic grammar.

Saudi actor Mohamed El-Shehri at the Venice Film Festival this month wearing a jubba designed by Abdulrahman Al-Abed.



Weekend

PROFILE

Meet Abdulrahman Al-Abed, the man taking Saudi fashion to the world

'Our culture has power that few people have yet realized,' the designer says

William Muttally Dubai

There's one picture that Saudi fashion designer Abdulrahman Al-Abed comes back to again and again. It was taken at the 2019 G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, and it shows Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman standing front and center among other world leaders. It's the Crown Prince's fashion choice that catches the eye — in a sea of suits, he is proudly adorned in national dress.

For Al-Abed, the founder of the groundbreaking fashion house Qormuz, this is all the proof he needs that Saudi fashion can change the world.

"We earn respect from people across the globe because of our strong culture, our unmistakable heritage," Al-Abed tells Arab News. "Once, it was the Japanese kimono, from another culture of rich tradition, that inspired every brand in the world. Our culture has power that few people have yet realized."

Al-Abed is a fan of history — both studying it and making it. Since founding Qormuz in 2017, the 28-year-old has built a brand unlike any other in the Kingdom, and this year he has started to capture the world's attention. Just this month, a jubba he made for Saudi actor Mohamed El-Shehri went viral; it was the first time a man has worn customary Arab dress on the red carpet of the storied Venice International Film Festival. This, along with other viral moments from the past year, is only the beginning, he explains.

"Just yesterday, in fact, we finished mapping out the next phase for the brand," Al-Abed reveals. "Over the first six years, we launched products in nearly every category in the fashion world — men's and women's fashion, accessories, perfume, jewelry and more. No matter where we expanded, however, each of those kept the spirit of the brand; each was imbued with a story, a culture, and an experience. Now, we're thinking bigger."

"Bigger" will include both ready-to-wear, everyday pieces and the avant-garde statement outfits designed for runways or



red carpets. The latter is often misunderstood by the uninitiated, but those pieces do more to communicate the idea of a brand than most realize. It is in that space that fashion becomes art, and that is where Al-Abed will place his canvas, using the Kingdom's history as his inspiration.

"We love to get people talking. At the same time, when we do this, it often inspires a fight. That is not something we look for, but I suppose it's inevitable. If we're taking inspiration from traditional garments and pieces of our country's rich history and using them in ways that people have



(Above and right) Images from the Qormuz lookbook. Supplied



never seen before, then some people will be upset," Al-Abed says.

"We need to respect our culture — on that we can all agree — but we need to do that with new ideas, and new designs," he continues. "We need to bring these traditional ideas along with us to the future."

In February, at the Saudi Cup in Riyadh, Qormuz debuted a dress called Al-Dalam on model Linda Qari. It was inspired by the pigeon houses of the region built in the early 20th century by King Abdulaziz, and it quickly became the most hotly-debated Saudi fashion piece in recent memory. While eye-catching, the strictly avant-garde piece did more than just create headlines for the brand, it intentionally evoked the rich history that inspired it, generating conversations about the country's oft-forgotten origins. That, Al-Abed explains, was the real point.

"I love history, and I love the stories of our nation. I come from a family that values education — my mother and father and I all love reading together. Even now, just before we started this conversation,

I was reading the journals of a British traveler who came here in 1862, and it's full of observations about our culture," Al-Abed says, getting it down off the shelf to show us. "This kind of study is where I get a lot of my ideas."

"With Qormuz, we love to tell a story," he continues. "I'm inspired by brands like Dior. Dior does so many different things in all different categories just like we do, but the pieces have a strong linked identity because they're so full of rich history that all comes from a unified vision. I'm



(Above) Saudi fashion designer Abdulrahman Al-Abed. (Left) Linda Qari at the Saudi Cup in Riyadh in February wearing the Al-Dalam dress inspired by the region's pigeon houses. (Below) Al-Abed with Sidney Toledano, CEO of LVMH Fashion Group and former CEO of Dior. Images supplied

inspired by that philosophy, but not their designs, per se. I think globally, but I act locally. I want to tell Saudi stories with my designs, and I believe that we will always have a success story if we have a strong story."

As voraciously as he consumes the region's history, there's

something deeply personal about Al-Abed's interest in the academic. It was a passion sparked by his grandfather, who taught him how to be a man who lives for others, and who would regale him with the tales of Riyadh's great past.

"My grandfather inspires me always — every day. I love to tell

people about him. He was a man who loved his country. He loved King Abdulaziz, and loved what he built. He built things too — he was a doctor, and he helped build hospitals in areas where people had no money and needed help. Even now, when I travel to those villages, people still tell me about how my grandfather helped them. He's been gone for 15 years, and I still think of him every day," he says.

There's a reason he constantly thinks back to King Abdulaziz too, and not just because he is Saudi Arabia's founding father. He was also a man who had a vision for a society that did not yet exist, one that embraced its heritage while changing with the times. At times, he would battle against those who were against his changes, but he set the country on a bold path it still walks today.

That is precisely the way that Al-Abed thinks about fashion, and why Qormuz may be on its own path to becoming the Dior of Saudi Arabia. Above all else, it is his mission to not only embrace Saudi customs, but to dispel the idea that preservation means stagnation.

"We need a new mentality, and we need new designs. When we envision the next 50 years, what will happen with our thobe, for example? What will happen to our bisht, our shemagh? If you look back to the bisht of King Abdulaziz and compare it to the bisht of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the design has clearly evolved. Our challenge now is to imagine the next evolution ourselves, and to accept that change is necessary," he says. "If you want perfectly preserved culture, go to the National Museum. At Qormuz, we're looking to 2050."

